SPAWN

HELL ON EARTH

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Spawn: Hell on Earth. October 2017. First Printing. Published by IMAGE COMICS, 2701 NW Vaughn St, Suite 780 Portland, OR 97210 USA. Originaly published in single issue format as *Spawn* issues #263-275. Spawn, its logo and its symbol are registered trademarks © 2017 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. All other related characters are TM and © 2017 Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. All rights reserved. The characters, events and stories in this publication are entirely fictional. With exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Todd McFarlane Productions, Inc. **For information regarding the CPSIA on this printed material call: 203-595-3636 and provide reference #RICH – 762792.**

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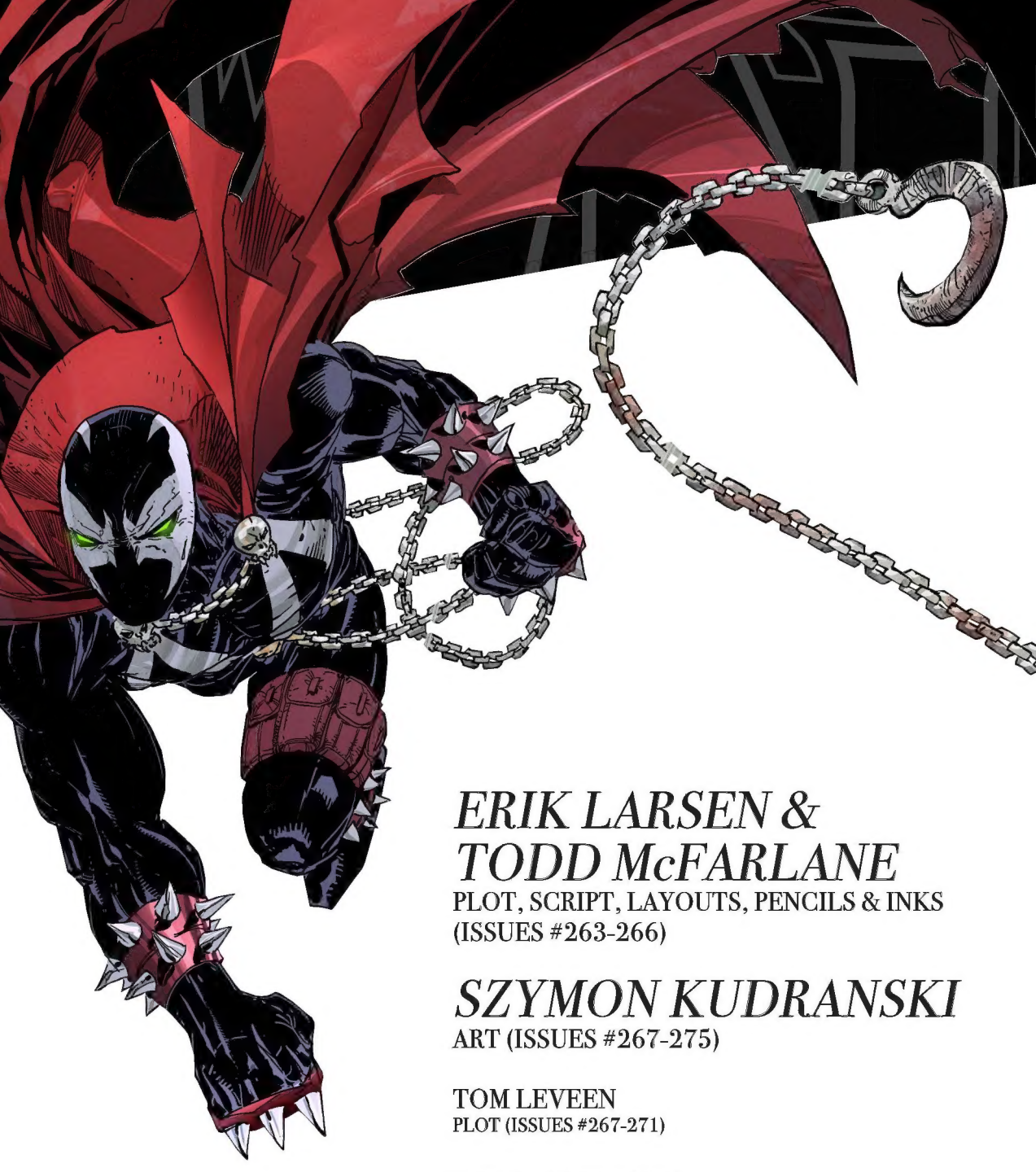

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SPAWN
I'M HUMAN AGAIN?!
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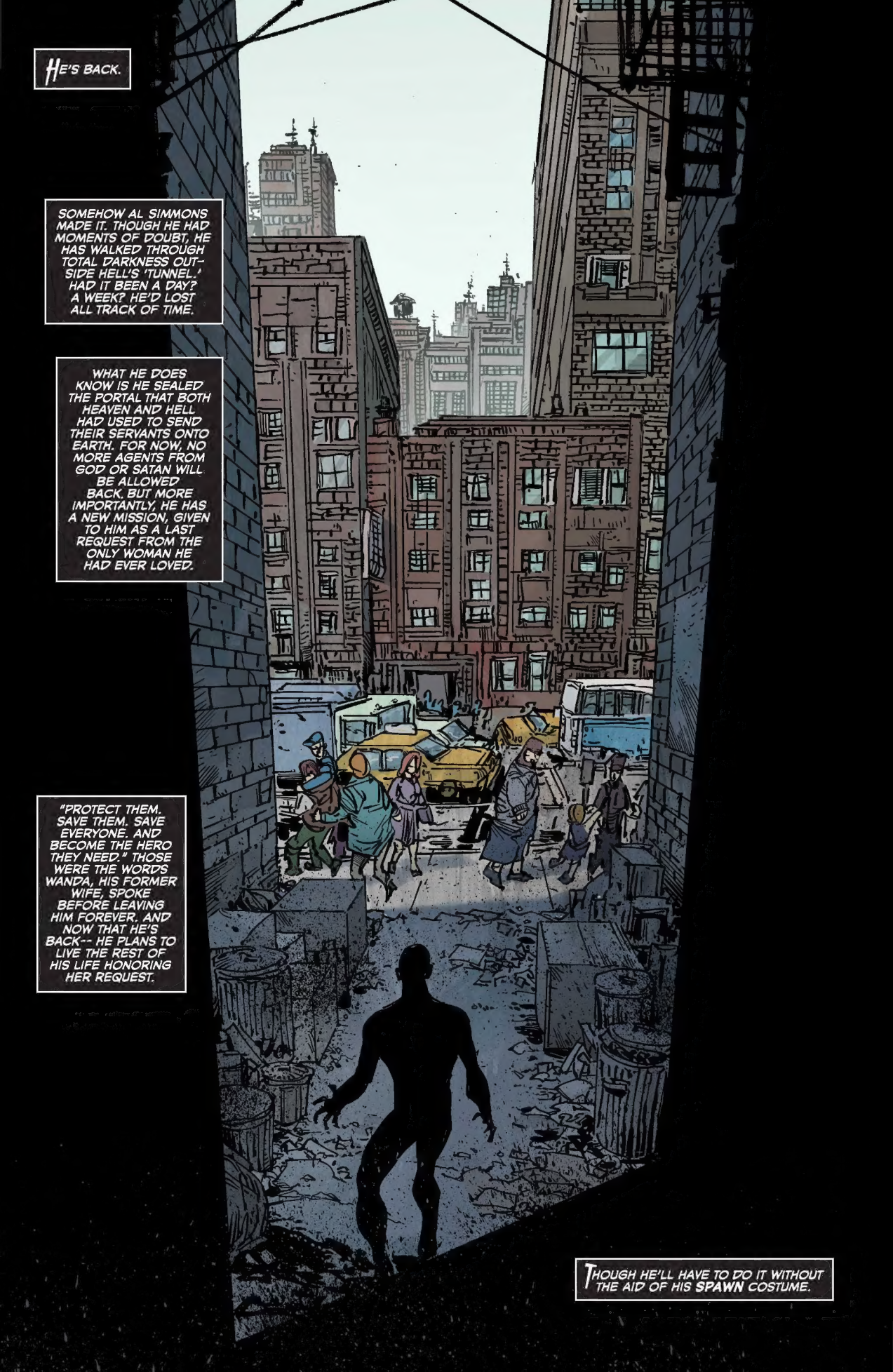

He's back.
Somehow Al Simmons made it. Though he had moments of doubt, he has walked through total darkness outside Hell's 'tunnel.' Had it been a day? A week? He'd lost all track of time.
What he does know is he sealed the portal that both Heaven and Hell had used to send their servants onto Earth. For now, no more agents from God or Satan will be allowed back. But more importantly, he has a new mission, given to him as a last request from the only woman he had ever loved.
"Protect them. Save them. Save everyone. And become the hero they need." Those were the words Wanda, his former wife, spoke before leaving him forever. And now that he's back-- he plans to live the rest of his life honoring her request.
Though he'll have to do it without the aid of his **SPAWN** costume.

HE SURRENDERED HIS SYMBIOTIC ARMOR TO SATAN IN RETURN FOR WANDA'S SOUL GETTING SAFE PASSAGE TO HEAVEN.
BUT BEFORE HANDING HIS LIVING SUIT TO SATAN... HE TOOK A SMALL PIECE OF IT FOR HIM-SELF, BEFORE TURNING THE REST OF THE COSTUME INTO A NUCLEAR BOMB.*
*See last issue-- Todd
WHATEVER HIS PLANS NOW, AL SIMMONS UNDERSTANDS THE RULES HAVE CHANGED.
BUT HE'S DETERMINED MORE THAN EVER TO BECOME A TRUE HERO.

AND TO NEVER BE 'ABSENT' FROM MANKIND'S NEEDS AGAIN. THAT'S HOW HIS ENEMIES WERE ABLE TO KILL WANDA-- BECAUSE HE WASN'T THERE. HE'D LEFT EARTH AND CREATED A VACUUM FOR EVIL TO THRIVE.*
HE WON'T MAKE THAT MISTAKE AGAIN.
THERE HE IS. THAT'S THE GUY I WAS TALKING ABOUT.
I'LL TAKE IT FROM HERE.
EXCUSE ME, SIR. I NEED TO ASK YOU A FEW THINGS.
LOOK, OFFICER, I'M SORRY ABOUT HOW I LOOK, BUT...
I NEED TO SEE SOME I.D.
*He left earth in issues 185 thru 250 — Todd

I DON'T HAVE ANY. AND I KNOW YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS BUT...
I CAN'T DO THIS. NOT RIGHT NOW.
THIS IS OFFICER THOMAS. A SUSPECT FLEEING QUESTIONING NEAR 78th AND YORK...
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, SIR. WE NEED YOU TO STOP.
NOW WHAT? THIS CAN'T BE HOW HIS NEW ROLE STARTS.

WE'RE GOING TO NEED YOU TO COME WITH US.
IF THEY FIND OUT WHO HE REALLY IS-- HIS LIFE GETS COMPLICATED IN A HURRY.
BUT BEFORE SIMMONS HAS THE CHANCE TO THINK THINGS THROUGH...
...HIS INSTINCTS TAKE OVER THE MOMENT THEY TOUCH HIM.
WHUP
THUK
DAMN YOU!

BLAM
I'M...
BLEEDING?

STAY DOWN! WE'LL CALL AN AMBULANCE-- JUST STAY WHERE YOU ARE. EVERY-THING'S GOING TO BE OKAY.
NO!
WE DON'T WANT ANYMORE TROUBLE. STOP MOVING.
YOU HEARD HIM.
GET YOUR HANDS OFF ME.
BAP
KRAK

LATER.
UH?
SNAP
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY THE HELL DO I HAVE CUFFS?
IT'S FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY. JUST... SETTLE DOWN.
YOU GUYS SHOOT ME FOR NOTHING AND YOU WANT ME 'TO SETTLE DOWN'? THAT'S BALLSY.
WE RAN YOUR PRINTS. NOTHING IS COMING UP ON YOU. SO UNTIL WE FIGURE OUT YOUR IDENTITY YOU'RE STUCK AT THIS HOSPITAL. AND YOUR WOUND WILL HEAL QUITE FINE, THE DOCTOR'S SAID.
IS THAT RIGHT. LUCKY FOR YOU GUYS.
WE JUST NEED SOME INFORMATION. YOU CAN EITHER GIVE IT TO US OR WE CAN CALL SOMEONE ON YOUR BEHALF. YOU HAVE A WIFE OR FRIEND WE CAN TALK TO?
YEAH...
HIS NAME IS TERRY FITZGERALD. HE WORKS FOR THE F.B.I. OR SOME OTHER GOVERNMENT AGENCY. HE'LL CLEAR THIS UP. UNTIL THEN I DON'T TALK.

IT TAKES 10 HOURS BUT THE AUTHORITIES TRACK TERRY DOWN. THEY ESCORT HIM TO AL'S HOSPITAL ROOM, HOPING THAT A PRIVATE CONVERSATION MAY LEAD TO THE INFORMATION THE POLICE SEEK.
YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, AL. DRAGGING ME INTO THIS SHIT.
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?
YOUR HELP.
HELP? YOU SAID YOU WERE GOING TO 'SAVE' WANDA AND THEN YOU JUST DISAPPEARED... VANISHED. NOW YOU WANT TO COME BACK AFTER ALL THIS TIME AND MESS UP MY LIFE?
DISAPPEARED? I DID SAVE WANDA... AND HER SOUL.
MAYBE, BUT THAT WAS A YEAR AGO. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN SINCE THEN?
ARE YOU SAYING THAT...
SHE'S BEEN DEAD FOR A YEAR.
THEY DID IT TO ME AGAIN.
DID WHAT?
SHIFTED TIME ON ME.

JESUS, AL. WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I THOUGHT I WAS GONE A FEW DAYS. YOU SAY IT WAS LONGER. I'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT THAT MEANS LATER.
RIGHT NOW I NEED YOUR HELP. WANDA SAID I COULD COUNT ON YOU.
WANDA.
WHERE IS SHE?
SHE'S SAFE... IN HEAVEN.
YOU NEED TO TRUST ME ON THAT PART. BUT SHE ASKED ME TO DO SOMETHING.
I'M TO PROTECT YOUR FAMILY. DO YOU UNDERSTAND?
TERRY...?
YOU KILLED HER AL. IF NOT FOR YOU SHE'D STILL BE ALIVE. MY CHILDREN WOULD STILL HAVE THEIR MOTHER.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
SHE IS DEAD BECAUSE OF ME. I'LL CARRY THAT THE REST OF MY LIFE.
AND NOW YOU WANT MY *HELP!? YOU GO TO HELL!* I DON'T WANT YOU NEAR MY FAMILY.
I GET IT! YOU'RE PISSED OFF. FINE! THINK WHATEVER YOU WANT ABOUT ME. BUT WHOEVER KILLED WANDA, THEY'RE STILL HERE-- ON EARTH. AND THEY *WILL* TRY AND ATTACK ME ANY WAY THEY CAN. INCLUDING GOING AFTER YOUR CHILDREN.
SO... YOU CAN EITHER HELP ME PROTECT THEM. OR YOU CAN GET OUT OF MY WAY.

EITHER WAY, I'M GOING TO DO WHAT WANDA ASKED ME TO.
WHAT DO YOU NEED?
GET ME OUT OF THIS PLACE. USE WHATEVER CONNECTIONS YOU HAVE AND MAKE THIS INCIDENT GO AWAY. THEY SAID MY PRINTS AREN'T IN THE SYSTEM, SO FEED THEM A STORY THEY'LL BUY. JUST GET ME OUT.
THEN WHAT?
THEN I'LL NEED SOME MONEY AND A PLACE TO STAY.
I'LL MAKE A FEW PHONE CALLS.
AFTER THEY RELEASE YOU, I THINK IT'S TIME I SHOWED YOU SOMETHING.
I'LL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
TERRY.
YEAH?
THANK YOU.

IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG. THE AGENCY TERRY CURRENTLY WORKS FOR HAS HIDDEN INFLUENCE IN EVERY CORNER OF THE GLOBE. GETTING A HOSPITAL TO RELEASE SOMEONE WHO APPEARS TO BE 'NORMAL' IS RATHER ROUTINE.
TERRY, I HAVEN'T HAD A CHANCE TO ASK YET... HOW ARE YOUR KIDS DOING?
I... THEY... SEEM TO BE OKAY. BUT I KNOW THEY'RE TRYING TO BE BRAVE. HIDING THE HOLE THAT IS THERE WITHOUT WANDA. THE TWINS SEEM TO BE DEALING WITH IT BETTER THAN CYAN.
IT'S BEEN TOUGH ON HER?
SHE'S IN DRUG REHAB. DOESN'T SEEM TO BE MAKING MUCH PROGRESS.
I'M SORRY TO HEAR THAT.
IF YOU CAN HELP HER, HELP HER IN ANY WAY, I'D...
CLAK
THERE! FINALLY.
I SHOULD HAVE TOLD YOU ABOUT THIS YEARS AGO.
WHAT'S HERE?
EVERYTHING WANDA COULDN'T BEAR TO THROW AWAY AFTER YOU DIED. AFTER YOUR FUNERAL SHE HAD ME MOVE A BUNCH OF STUFF THAT, I'VE ALWAYS ASSUMED MEANT SOMETHING TO HER. DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT'S INSIDE THE BOXES AND CRATES.

MY GOD. IT'S ALL HERE.
CAN YOU GIVE ME A MINUTE?
STANDING GUARD OUTSIDE, MAKING SURE NO ONE SEES THEM, TERRY WAITS TO LOCK UP THE STORAGE GARAGE ONCE AL GIVES THE WORD.
TERRY, I THINK YOU SHOULD KNOW...
THAT IN ORDER FOR ME TO SAVE WANDA, I HAD TO SURRENDER MY COSTUME.
YOU CAN DO THAT?
IN HELL-- I COULD. BUT SOMETHING SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED. BESIDES HAVING NO SYMBIOTE, I SEEM TO ALMOST BE HUMAN AGAIN.
SO, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
IT MEANS I'M GOING TO NEED TO RELY ON PAST SKILLS TO SURVIVE.

EAT
MAX'S DINER
MAX'S DI
SO MAKE ME UNDERSTAND SOME-THING...

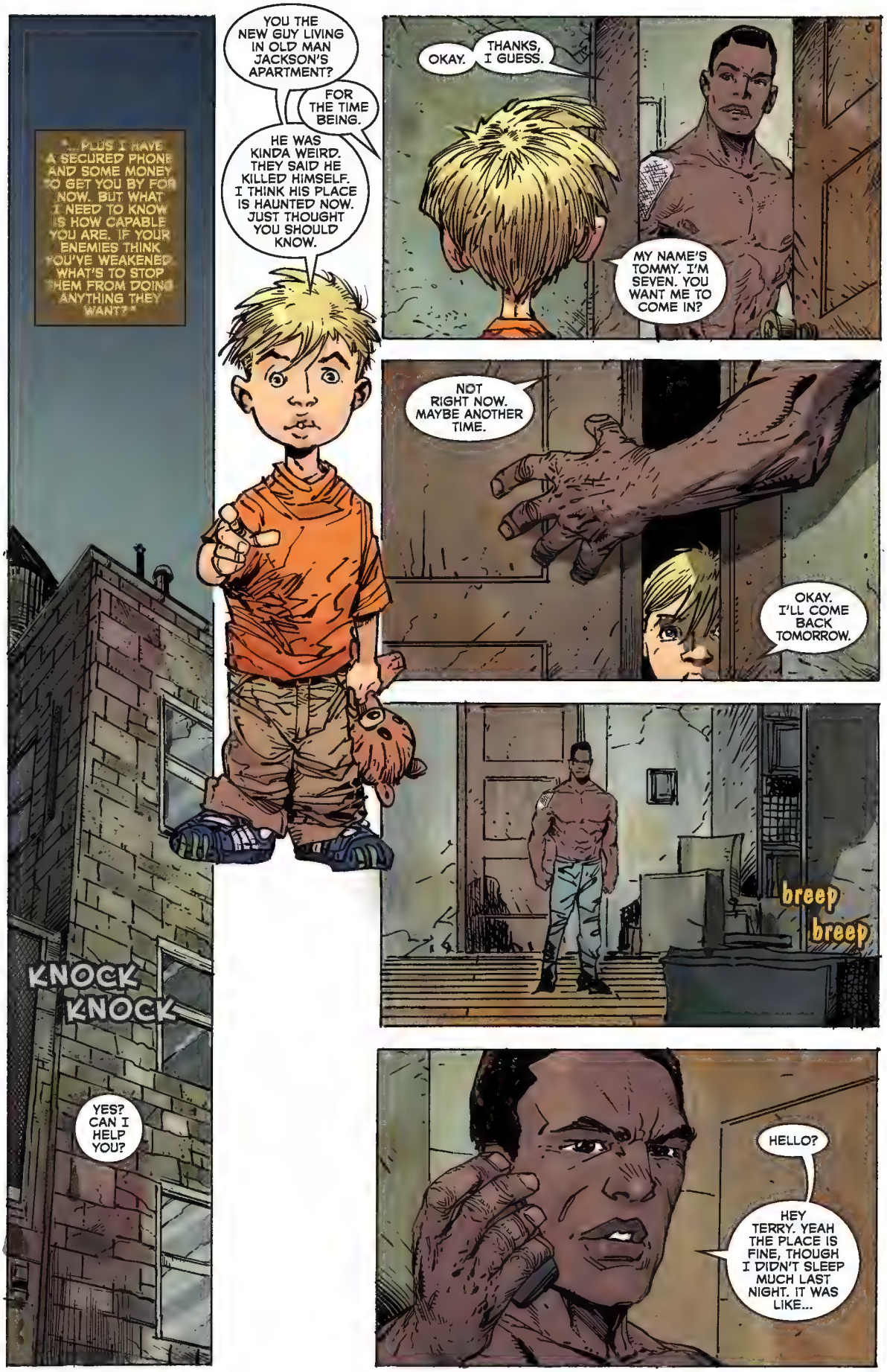
...IF YOU DON'T HAVE YOUR COSTUME, THEN DOESN'T THAT MEAN YOU'VE LOST ALL YOUR POWERS TOO?
THAT'S WHAT I NEED TO FIND OUT. DON'T KNOW IF THIS NEW TRANSFORMATION IS TEMPORARY OR NOT.

BUT I STILL HAVE A SMALL PIECE OF THE COSTUME I...
MORE COFFEE, GENTLE-MEN?
ANGELA
PLEASE.

ANGELA
YOUR NAME'S ANGELA?

YES.
I KNEW AN ANGELA ONCE.
WITH A NAME LIKE THAT SHE MUST HAVE BEEN AWESOME.
NOT ALWAYS.

LIKE I WAS SAYING, I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT SPAWN POWERS I STILL HAVE AND SEE IF THAT PIECE OF COSTUME IS OF VALUE.
I'VE GOT YOU SET UP IN AN APARTMENT. NO ONE WILL KNOW YOU'RE THERE...


...PLUS I HAVE A SECURED PHONE AND SOME MONEY TO GET YOU BY FOR NOW. BUT WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IS HOW CAPABLE YOU ARE. IF YOUR ENEMIES THINK YOU'VE WEAKENED WHAT'S TO STOP THEM FROM DOING ANYTHING THEY WANT?"
KNOCK KNOCK
YES? CAN I HELP YOU?
YOU THE NEW GUY LIVING IN OLD MAN JACKSON'S APARTMENT?
FOR THE TIME BEING.
HE WAS KINDA WEIRD. THEY SAID HE KILLED HIMSELF. I THINK HIS PLACE IS HAUNTED NOW. JUST THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW.
OKAY.
THANKS, I GUESS.
MY NAME'S TOMMY. I'M SEVEN. YOU WANT ME TO COME IN?
NOT RIGHT NOW. MAYBE ANOTHER TIME.
OKAY. I'LL COME BACK TOMORROW.
breep breep
HELLO?
HEY TERRY. YEAH THE PLACE IS FINE, THOUGH I DIDN'T SLEEP MUCH LAST NIGHT. IT WAS LIKE...

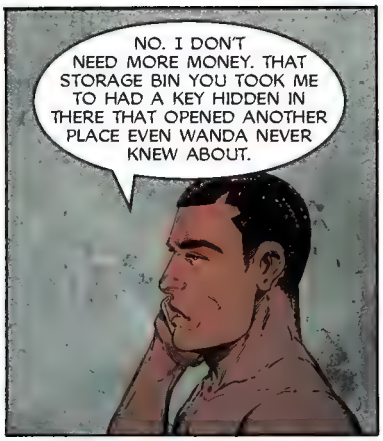
...I DON'T KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT, BUT I HAD SOME BIZARRE DREAM THE CITY WAS GETTING OVERRUN BY A BUNCH OF MESSED UP BAD GUYS.
I KEPT WAKING UP, BUT EVERY TIME I SHUT MY EYES AGAIN I KEPT GOING BACK TO THE SAME DREAM.
"AND GUESS WHAT HAPPENED?"

"I TOOK THEM OUT. ALL OF THEM. ONE BY ONE.
"THEY NEVER KNEW WHAT HIT THEM.
"BY THE TIME THEY REALIZED I WAS EVEN THERE, IT WAS TOO LATE. BUT THE THING I CAN'T GET OUT OF MY MIND IS THE LOOK IN THEIR EYES. THEY WERE TERRIFIED. I SWEAR I COULD FEEL THEIR FEAR.
"AND YOU KNOW WHAT SCARED THEM?"

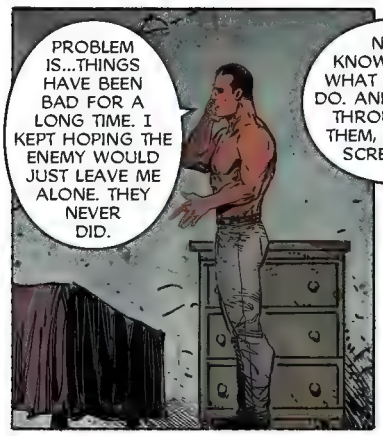
"IT WAS ME!
"BECAUSE I WAS
SPAWN
AGAIN AND THAT SCARED THE SHIT OUT OF ALL OF THEM!
"WANDA WAS RIGHT. THE WORLD NEEDS SPAWN."

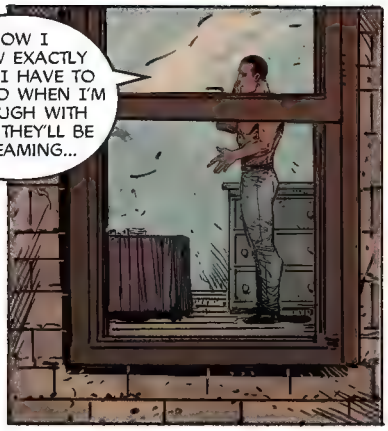
I ALREADY HAD PLANS WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO TO MY ENEMIES WHEN I RETURNED.* BUT LAST NIGHT CONFIRMED ALL OF IT. SO WHETHER I HAVE POWERS OR NOT, I'M NOT GOING TO LET THE EVIL THAT'S LOCKED HERE ALREADY HAVE IT'S WAY.
AND I MAY NEED YOUR HELP FROM TIME TO TIME, TERRY.
BUT I NEED TO KEEP YOU OUT OF TROUBLE. I CAN'T COMPROMISE YOU WITH YOUR BOSSES.
*See issue #250 -- Todd

WHAT'S THAT?

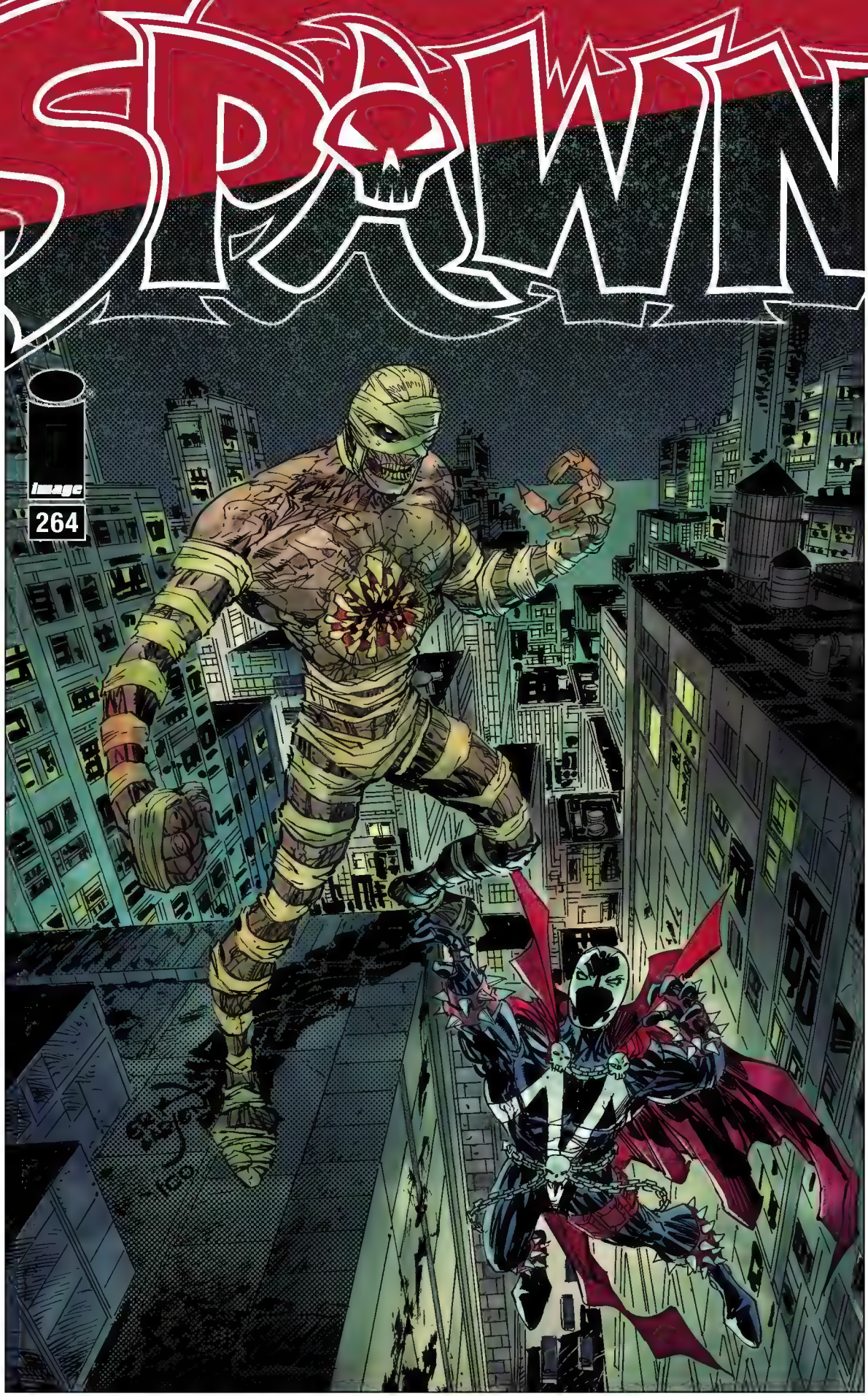

NO. I DON'T NEED MORE MONEY. THAT STORAGE BIN YOU TOOK ME TO HAD A KEY HIDDEN IN THERE THAT OPENED ANOTHER PLACE EVEN WANDA NEVER KNEW ABOUT.

I HID THINGS THERE--AWAY FROM HER--IN CASE THINGS GOT BAD.


PROBLEM IS...THINGS HAVE BEEN BAD FOR A LONG TIME. I KEPT HOPING THE ENEMY WOULD JUST LEAVE ME ALONE. THEY NEVER DID.


NOW I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I HAVE TO DO. AND WHEN I'M THROUGH WITH THEM, THEY'LL BE SCREAMING...

"SPAWN, LEAVE US ALONE!"


SPAWN
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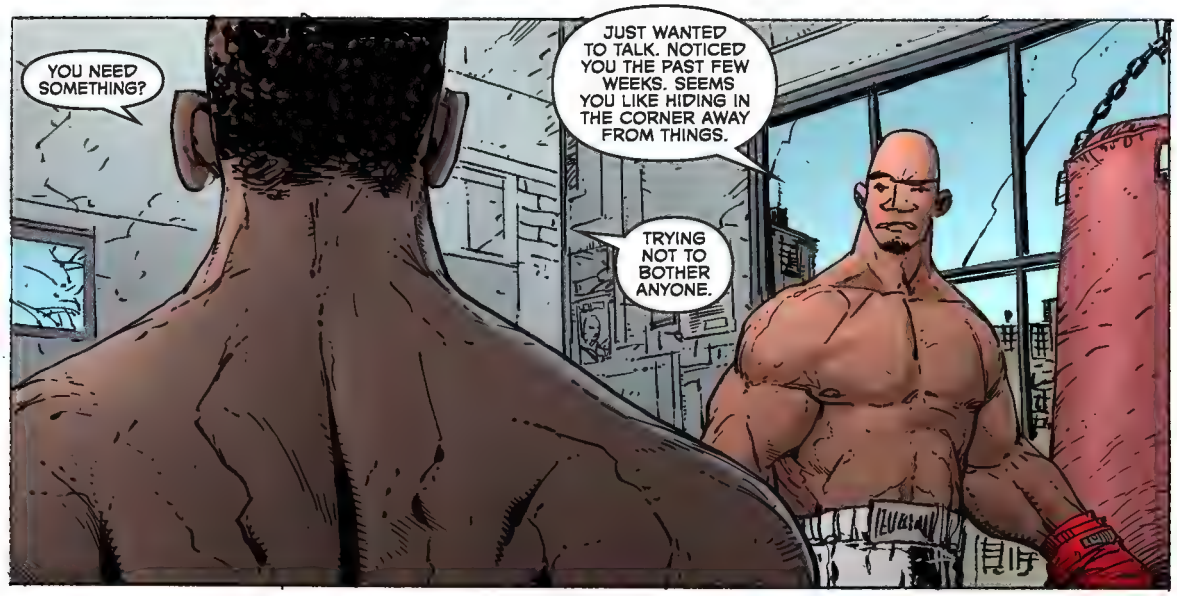
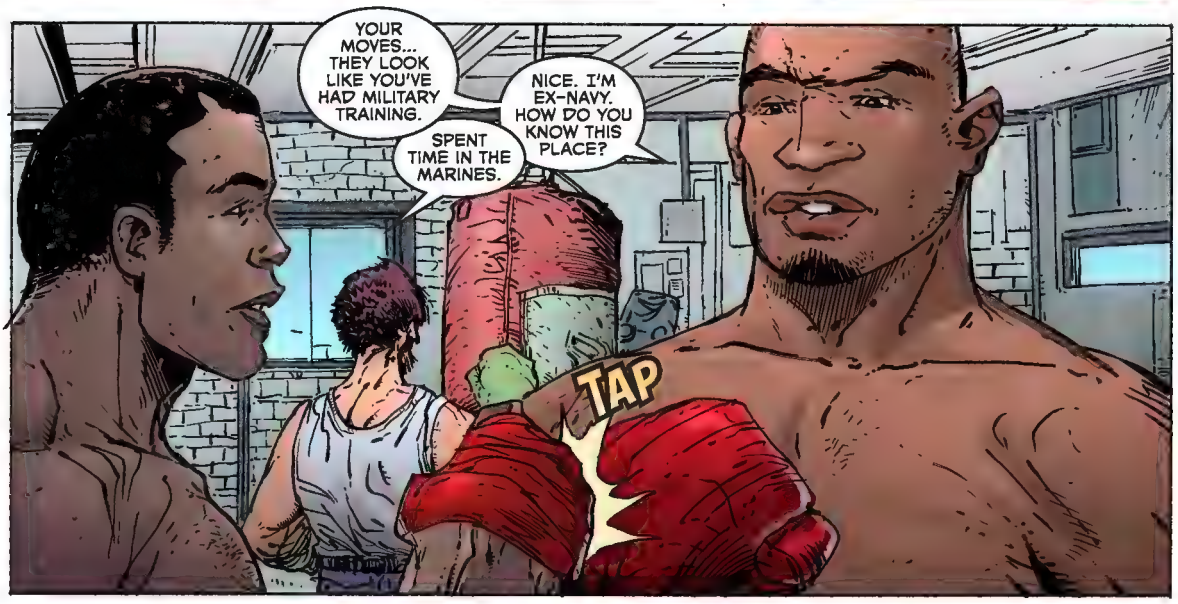
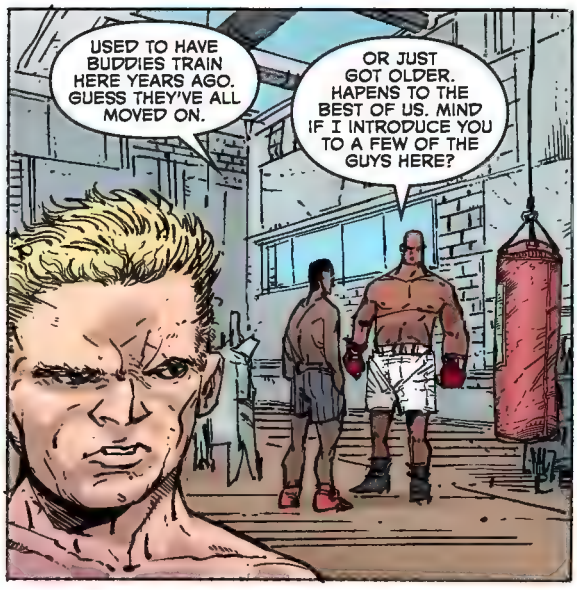
I KNEW IT HAD TO START AT SOME POINT.
THAT ONE OF THEM WOULD COME CRAWLING OUT OF THE SHADOWS.
NO...
THEY HAD TO... BECAUSE I'D *TRAPPED* THEM ALL.
PLEASE...
AND EVENTUALLY THEY HAD TO SHOW THEMSELVES.
WHICH IS *EXACTLY* HOW I PLANNED IT!

AND EXACTLY WHAT I WANTED!
THE FIRST ONE CALLED HIMSELF DECAY!
TRUTHFULLY, I DIDN'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT HE CALLED HIMSELF-- WHAT ANY OF THEM WANTED TO CALL THEMSELVES.
MY MISSION IS SIMPLY TO ERADICATE ANYONE-- OR ANYTHING-- THAT TRIES TO IMPOSE THEIR POWER OVER INNOCENTS... EVEN WHEN THE 'INNOCENT' AREN'T QUITE SO CLEAN THEMSELVES.
I ALSO KNEW THAT HAVING LOST MOST OF MY SPAWN POWERS RECENTLY WOULD PUT ME AT A DEEP DISADVANTAGE.*
*See issue 262--Todd

WITHOUT THAT POWER, I NEEDED TO RETRAIN MYSELF THE WAY I HAD BEFORE BECOMING SPAWN. WHEN ALL I RELIED ON WAS MY OWN SKILLS AND STRENGTH. MIXED IN WITH YEARS OF INTENSE MILITARY TRAINING
IT USED TO BE GOOD ENOUGH TO KEEP ME ALIVE. NO REASON TO DOUBT IT WOULDN'T AGAIN.
SOUTHPAWS
GYM
PWAP
DUDE! TAKE IT EASY. WE'RE JUST MESSING AROUND.
I'LL PULL IT BACK A BIT. DIDN'T MEAN TO UNLOAD THAT HARD.
DON'T WORRY. BUT LET'S TAKE A TEN-MINUTE BREAK THEN GET BACK TO IT.
HEY..!
NICE MOVES. HELLUVA PUNCH, TOO.
THE PROBLEM WITH SHOWING SOME OF MY SKILLS IS THAT IT DRAWS UNWANTED ATTENTION.
THANKS.
GOT SOMEONE OVER HERE THAT WANTS A FEW MINUTES OF YOUR TIME.


YOU NEED SOMETHING?
JUST WANTED TO TALK. NOTICED YOU THE PAST FEW WEEKS. SEEMS YOU LIKE HIDING IN THE CORNER AWAY FROM THINGS.
TRYING NOT TO BOTHER ANYONE.


YOUR MOVES... THEY LOOK LIKE YOU'VE HAD MILITARY TRAINING.
SPENT TIME IN THE MARINES.
NICE. I'M EX-NAVY. HOW DO YOU KNOW THIS PLACE?
TAP


USED TO HAVE BUDDIES TRAIN HERE YEARS AGO. GUESS THEY'VE ALL MOVED ON.
OR JUST GOT OLDER. HAPENS TO THE BEST OF US. MIND IF I INTRODUCE YOU TO A FEW OF THE GUYS HERE?

SURE.

GENTLEMEN, THIS HERE IS AL. HE'S A VET. MARINES.
NICE TO MEET YOU. I'M MICKEY.
WORM.
BUDDY.
MICKEY DID THREE TOURS OF AFGHANISTAN. WORM IS EX-AIR FORCE, IRAQ VET. AND BUDDY'S JUST A WORTHLESS SACK OF SHIT.
NOT ALWAYS.
GLAD TO MEET YOU.
AL JUST KNOCKED ROCKY ON HIS ASS WITHOUT BREAKING A SWEAT.
THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES WERE SPENT REMINISCING ABOUT OUR MILITARY LIVES AND ALL THE HELL WE PUT UP WITH.
BUT WHAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW IS I WAS SIZING THEM UP. EACH OF THEM. BECAUSE, AT SOME POINT I'M GOING TO NEED OUTSIDE HELP WITH MY 'NEW WAR.'

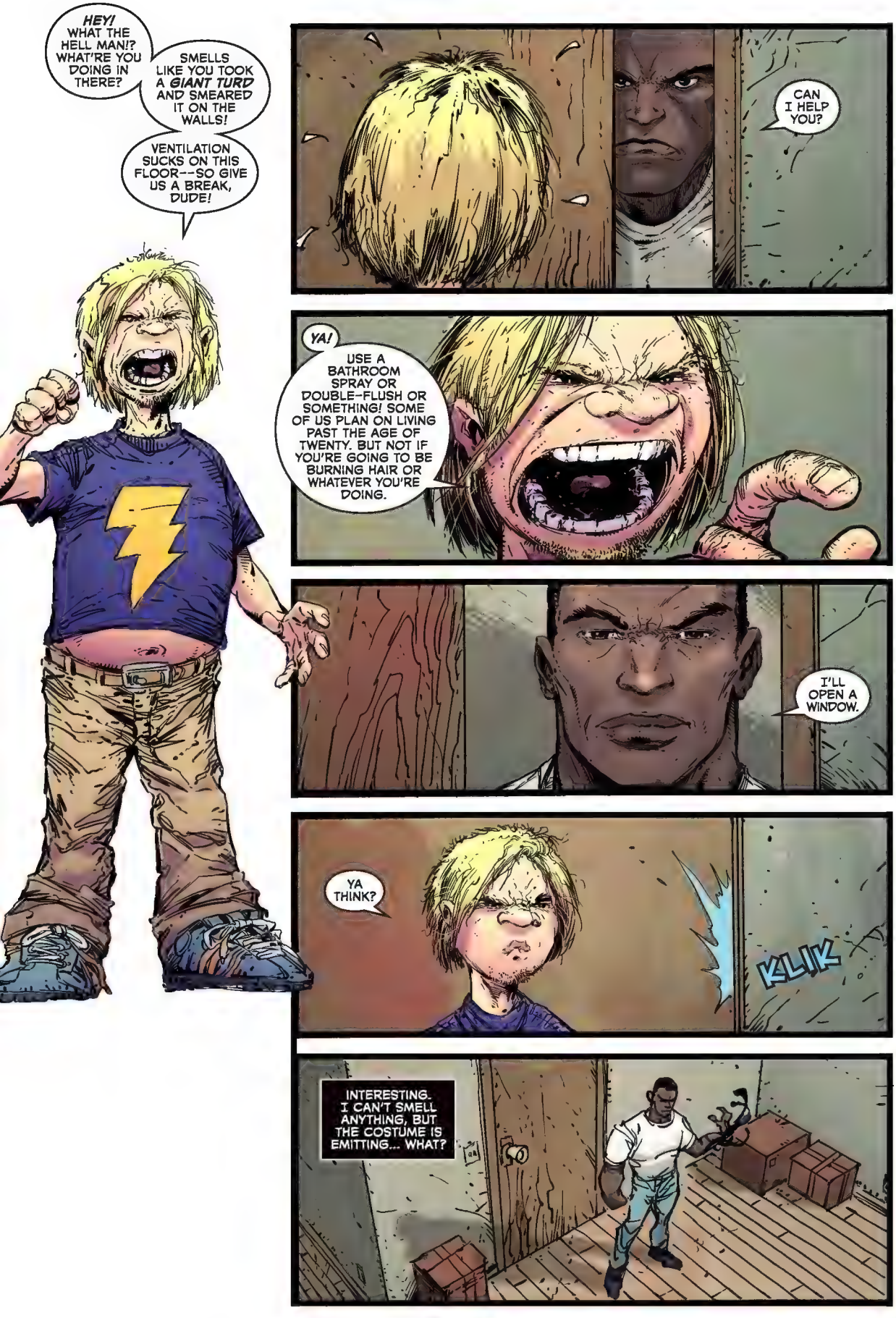
THERE'S NO WAY I CAN BE EVERYWHERE AT THE SAME TIME.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
klik
klik
klik
EERAUUUGH

THOUGH I MAY NEED HELP SOME DAY-- OTHER THINGS I NEED TO DO ALONE.

YO.
YOU NEED A HAND WITH THAT STUFF? BEEN DOING QUITE A FEW LOADS HAVEN'T YOU?
THAT'S OKAY. I'VE GOT IT.

DON'T NEED TO SCARE THE NEIGHBORS, BUT I'LL NEED ACCESS TO FIREPOWER UNTIL I GET MY COSTUME BACK ONLINE.

I STILL HAVE NO IDEA WHEN THAT'LL BE.
BUT I DO KNOW THIS: IF I CAN GROW IT BACK AGAIN I'M GOING TO BE ITS "MASTER."
NOK NOK NOK


HEY! WHAT THE HELL MAN!? WHAT'RE YOU DOING IN THERE?
SMELLS LIKE YOU TOOK A GIANT TURD AND SMEARED IT ON THE WALLS!
VENTILATION SUCKS ON THIS FLOOR--SO GIVE US A BREAK, DUDE!
CAN I HELP YOU?
YA! USE A BATHROOM SPRAY OR DOUBLE-FLUSH OR SOMETHING! SOME OF US PLAN ON LIVING PAST THE AGE OF TWENTY. BUT NOT IF YOU'RE GOING TO BE BURNING HAIR OR WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING.
I'LL OPEN A WINDOW.
YA THINK?
KLIK
INTERESTING. I CAN'T SMELL ANYTHING, BUT THE COSTUME IS EMITTING... WHAT?

I'D HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER.
BECAUSE MY FIRST BIG TEST OF SURVIVAL WAS ABOUT TO ARRIVE.

THIS IS WHERE I WOULD BEGIN TO KEEP MY WORD TO MY WIFE: WHEN I PROMISED HER I WOULD "STOP THEM."

YOU SURE YOU WANT TO DO THIS NOW?
I HAVE TO, TERRY. SO WHAT AM I LOOKING AT?
WE DON'T KNOW. BUT THERE ARE THINGS THAT EXIST WE CAN'T EXPLAIN.

AND THIS IS ONE OF THEM?

YES. JIM DOWNING ISN'T THE ONLY EXPERIMENT STILL ALIVE.

THERE'S A BEING WHO CAN ROT ANYTHING IT TOUCHES AND IT APPEARS IT HAS BEEN HIRED TO ELIMINATE A NUMBER OF KEY WITNESSES TO A MOB CASE THAT'S GOING TO TRIAL.
NO WITNESSES, NO CASE.
EXACTLY. EVEN IF IT MEANS THE MOBSTER HAS TO ELIMINATE HIS OWN CREW.

WHO'S LEFT?
THE MOST CRUCIAL IS A FORMER ACCOUNTANT. A SCUMBAG NAMED "BUSTER" HUGHES. START THERE.
GOT IT.

AL, IN ALL SERIOUSNESS: BE CAREFUL.

FOR THE NEXT WEEK I TRACKED "BUSTER'S EVERY MOVE. HE WAS PRETTY ROUTINE WITH HOW HE SPENT HIS TIME. WENT TO THE SAME PLACES AT THE SAME TIMES. HE WAS AS ORGANIZED AS YOU'D EXPECT A CAREER ACCOUNTANT TO BE.
THE PROBLEM IS THAT MADE HIM AN EASY TARGET TOO. IF I COULD DISCERN HIS PATTERNS, SO COULD OTHERS.
THIS SUCKER DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HE'D BECOME A DAMN BECKON TO ANYONE WHO WANTED TO FIND HIM.
IT STRUCK ME AS ODD THAT HE WOULD EVEN VENTURE OUT AT NIGHT ON HIS OWN... LIKE HE DIDN'T HAVE A CARE IN THE WORLD. GUESS WORKING FOR THE MOB GIVES YOU A CERTAIN SENSE OF ARROGANCE.

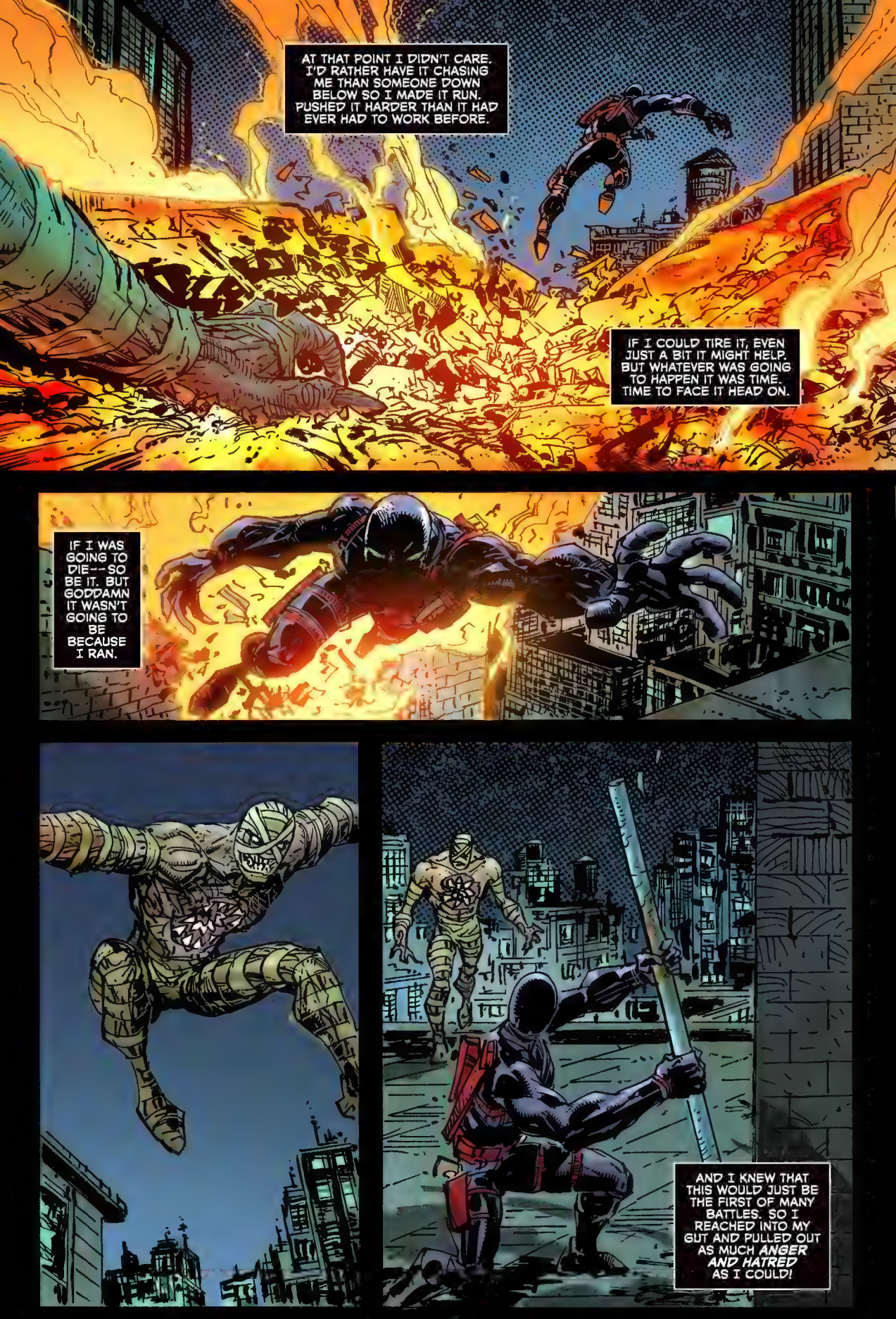
WHICH MADE HIM VERY SELF-ASSURED.
OR VERY STUPID.
EITHER WAY, THE ENEMY FINALLY MADE ITS MOVE.

MY FIRST INSTINCT WAS TO TACKLE IT. DRIVE IT TO THE GROUND TRYING TO GET THE JUMP ON IT. BUT TERRY'S INTEL SAID THIS WASN'T SOMETHING 'NORMAL.' I TRIED FIGHTING IT LIKE A MAN I WAS DEAD.
DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WOULD WORK AGAINST THIS THING SO I BROUGHT OPTIONS. GUNS, GRENADES AND LOTS OF BLADES.
LONG BLADES TO KEEP MY DISTANCE UNTIL I FOUND A WEAKNESS. WHICH I DID. SOMEHOW I WAS ABLE TO TOUCH THE CREATURE WITHOUT IT BURNING ME, BUT THAT WOULDN'T BE USEFUL IF HE COULD REACH ME.

SO I GOT TO DRILL HIM HARD IN HIS SPINE TO HELP BREAK MY FALL. THAT ONLY BOUGHT ME A COUPLE SECONDS AND WHEN I TURNED TO CUT HIS THROAT WITH EVERY OUNCE OF STRENGTH I HAD...
...I SAW WHAT THIS CREATURE COULD DO.

MY SWORD MELTED AWAY LIKE PAPER IN A FIRE.
WHICH MADE ME DOUBT MY NEXT MOVE. IF A STEEL BLADE COULDN'T DENT IT WHAT WOULD LEAD BULLETS BE ABLE TO DO?
WITHOUT THINKING I SHOT FOR ITS CHEST BUT IT HAD SOME MESSED UP LIVING JAWS THAT SEEMED TO SWALLOW THE BULLETS.
AND IT MOVED FASTER THAN IT LOOKED, FORCING ME TO PLAY DEFENSE SOONER THAN I'D WANTED.

AS HIS GROWLS AND SHRIEKS GREW LOUDER I ONLY HAD ONE DIRECTION TO GO...
UP!
I'D FIGURE OUT HOW TO FOLLOW HIM IN A MINUTE.
INSTEAD HE WAS ABLE TO CLIMB! I THOUGHT HE COULDN'T DO THAT BECAUSE HIS 'TOUCH' WOULD ROT THINGS.
YET SOMEHOW HE WAS ABLE TO TURN HIS POWERS ON AND OFF.


AT THAT POINT I DIDN'T CARE. I'D RATHER HAVE IT CHASING ME THAN SOMEONE DOWN BELOW SO I MADE IT RUN. PUSHED IT HARDER THAN IT HAD EVER HAD TO WORK BEFORE.
IF I COULD TIRE IT, EVEN JUST A BIT IT MIGHT HELP. BUT WHATEVER WAS GOING TO HAPPEN IT WAS TIME. TIME TO FACE IT HEAD ON.
IF I WAS GOING TO DIE--SO BE IT. BUT GODDAMN IT WASN'T GOING TO BE BECAUSE I RAN.
AND I KNEW THAT THIS WOULD JUST BE THE FIRST OF MANY BATTLES. SO I REACHED INTO MY GUT AND PULLED OUT AS MUCH *ANGER AND HATRED* AS I COULD!

THIS THING... THIS CREATURE WAS JUST LIKE ALL THE OTHERS! WANTING TO DESTROY AND HURT THINGS. TO RUIN LIVES IF THEY COULDN'T KILL THEM. THIS HAS BEEN HAPPENING FOREVER AND I'M SICK OF IT!
ENOUGH!
THIS PIECE OF SHIT WAS ONE OF A THOUSAND, WHO PREY ON KIDS, WOMEN AND THE WEAK. BUT I'M DONE RUNNING.
SO I UNLOADED WITH EVERYTHING I HAD AS FAST AS I COULD AND I DIDN'T CARE IF NONE OF IT HURT IT. I WANTED SOMETHING ELSE...
FOR IT TO GET MAD!

I KNOW HOW ANGER WORKS. IT CLOUDS YOUR BRAIN. I TAUNTED IT... RUTHLESSLY! SO WHEN IT LEAPT MY REACTION WAS SIMPLE...
...I DUCKED!
THE SOUND IT MADE HITTING THE GROUND WAS LIKE A WATERMELON EXPLODING. ITS GUTS SPRAYED EVERYWHERE.
IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT I KNEW.
I KNEW I WOULD KILL EACH AND EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM. SO WELCOME, YOU 'EVIL.' KEEP SHOWING YOURSELF BECAUSE I PLAN ON MEETING YOU AS MUCH AS I CAN.

SPAWN
LARSEN
McFARLANE
FCO
image
265

IT'S TRYING... STRUGGLING TO GROW. STRUGGLING TO GET STRONGER.
BUT IT'S *NOT EVEN* CLOSE TO BEING READY. THAT'S A PROBLEM.
IT'S BEEN TWO WEEKS--I THOUGHT IT'D BE MORE ADVANCED THAN IT IS.
I KNOW IT WAS JUST A SMALL SCRAP OF COSTUME I CAME BACK WITH*... BUT IT SCALED-UP TO FIT MY BODY WITHOUT MUCH EFFORT. I ASSUMED IT WAS NEARLY HEALED.
*Issue 260 (when he returned from Hell)--Todd
INSTEAD IT'S BEEN ACTING WITHOUT ANY RHYME OR REASON. AND I *SURE AS HELL* CAN'T CONTROL IT!

WHICH MEANS EVERYTHING I'VE BEEN PLANNING GETS PUT ON HOLD UNTIL I KNOW WHAT I'M DEALING WITH. AND THE BIZARRE THING IS, IT WON'T RESPOND THE WAY I WANT... OR EVEN COME CLOSE TO DOING WHAT IT USED TO. BUT NOW IT'S DOING SOMETHING I'VE NEVER SEEN.
LIKE IT'S TRYING TO WALK... ON ITS OWN.
SO, NOW I'VE GOT TWO THINGS I'M TRYING TO JUGGLE. TESTING THE COSTUME'S LIMITS AND STAYING ALIVE IN THE PROCESS. I GUESS I HAD TAKEN FOR GRANTED ALL THESE YEARS THAT I'D BE PROTECTED SOMEHOW. NO MATTER WHAT SHIT STORM CAME MY WAY.
AND I WAS SO READY FOR THEM. I HAD MY PLAN--I FINALLY KNEW WHAT THE RULES WERE AND HOW TO PLAY THEM. THEN THEY KILLED WANDA*. THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING. BEFORE I COULD EVEN START. IT WAS LIKE THEY WERE WAITING FOR ME.
AFTER ALL MY TIME AWAY, THEY WERE SOMEHOW STILL WAITING FOR ME. LIKE *THEY KNEW* I WAS COMING BACK.**
*Spawn: Resurrection--Todd
**Issue 250--Todd

WHICH IS WHY I NEED TO KNOW HOW MUCH I CAN TRUST MY COSTUME. THIS 'CHAIN WALKING' IS COOL BUT I DON'T KNOW IF IT'LL LAST.
WHICH MEANS I'LL NEED TO LEAN ON MY MILITARY SKILLS MORE THAN I HAD ANTICIPATED.
IN A PERFECT WORLD, I'D USE MY COSTUME AND MY OWN SKILLS--TOGETHER.
BUT UNTIL I COMPREHEND WHY THE COSTUME'S STRUGGLING SO MUCH, I'M GOING TO NEED A 'PLAN B.'

THAT PLAN ENTAILS MORE 'TESTING'.
EAT
MAX'S DINER

IN THIS CASE, IT'S WITH PEOPLE. AT SOME POINT I'M GOING TO NEED HELP WITH MY WAR. I WON'T BE ABLE TO DO IT ON MY OWN. SO IT'S JUST A MATTER OF SEEING WHO I CAN TRUST WHEN THE CRUCIAL TIME COMES.
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, EARL.

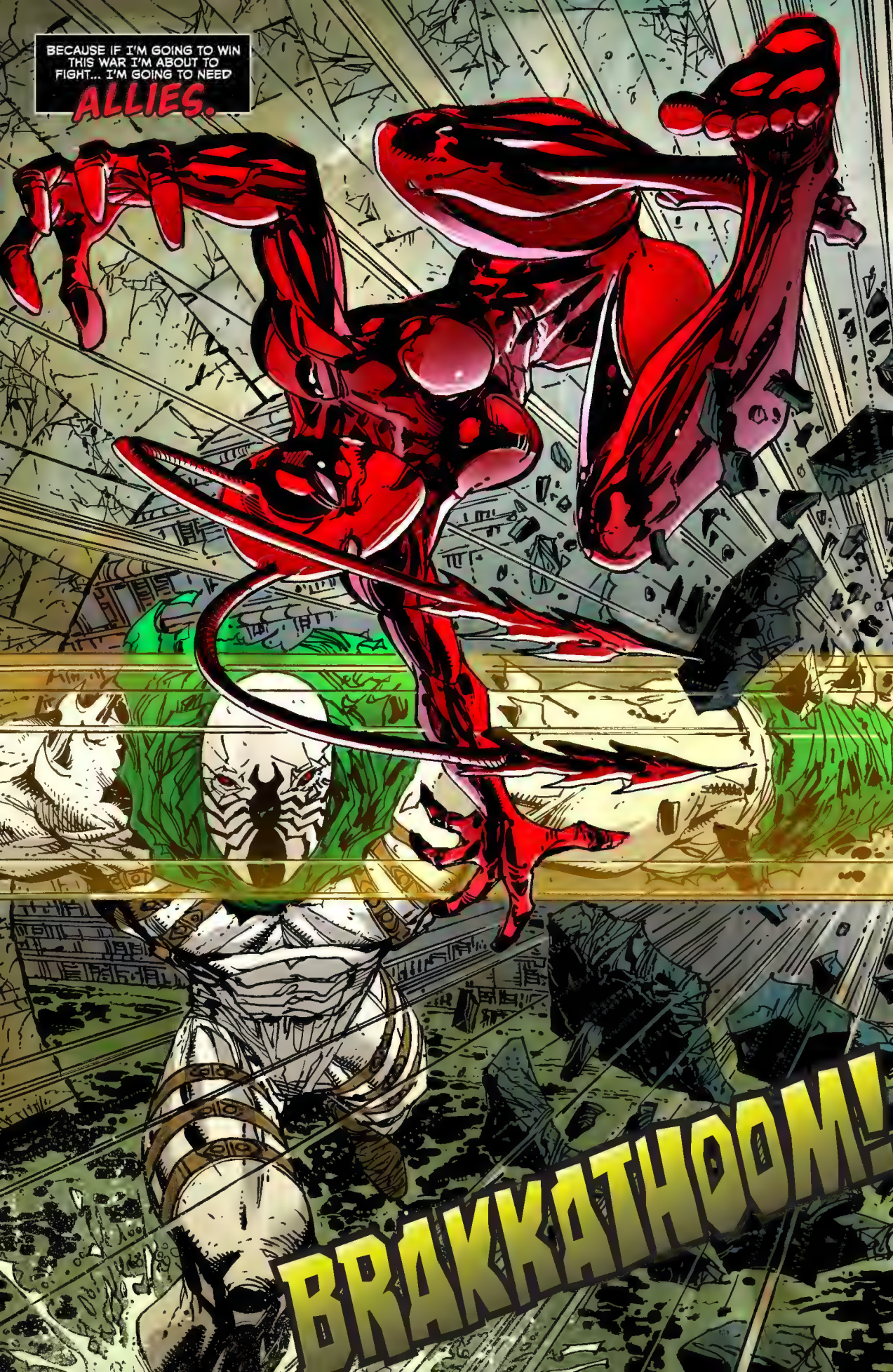
DON'T SWEAT IT. I APPRECIATE YOU INVITING ME IN THE FIRST PLACE. HOW'S YOUR DAY BEEN GOING?

NOT TOO BAD. JUST TRYING TO FIGURE A FEW THINGS OUT. HOW ABOUT YOU?

AS HE TALKS I LISTEN TO EVERY WORD HE USES. SEEING IF I DETECT ANYTHING THAT TELLS ME HE'S ANYTHING BUT HONEST.
HE'S EX-NAVY, SO MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HE'S BEEN THROUGH THE MEAT GRINDER. WHICH IS A GOOD START.

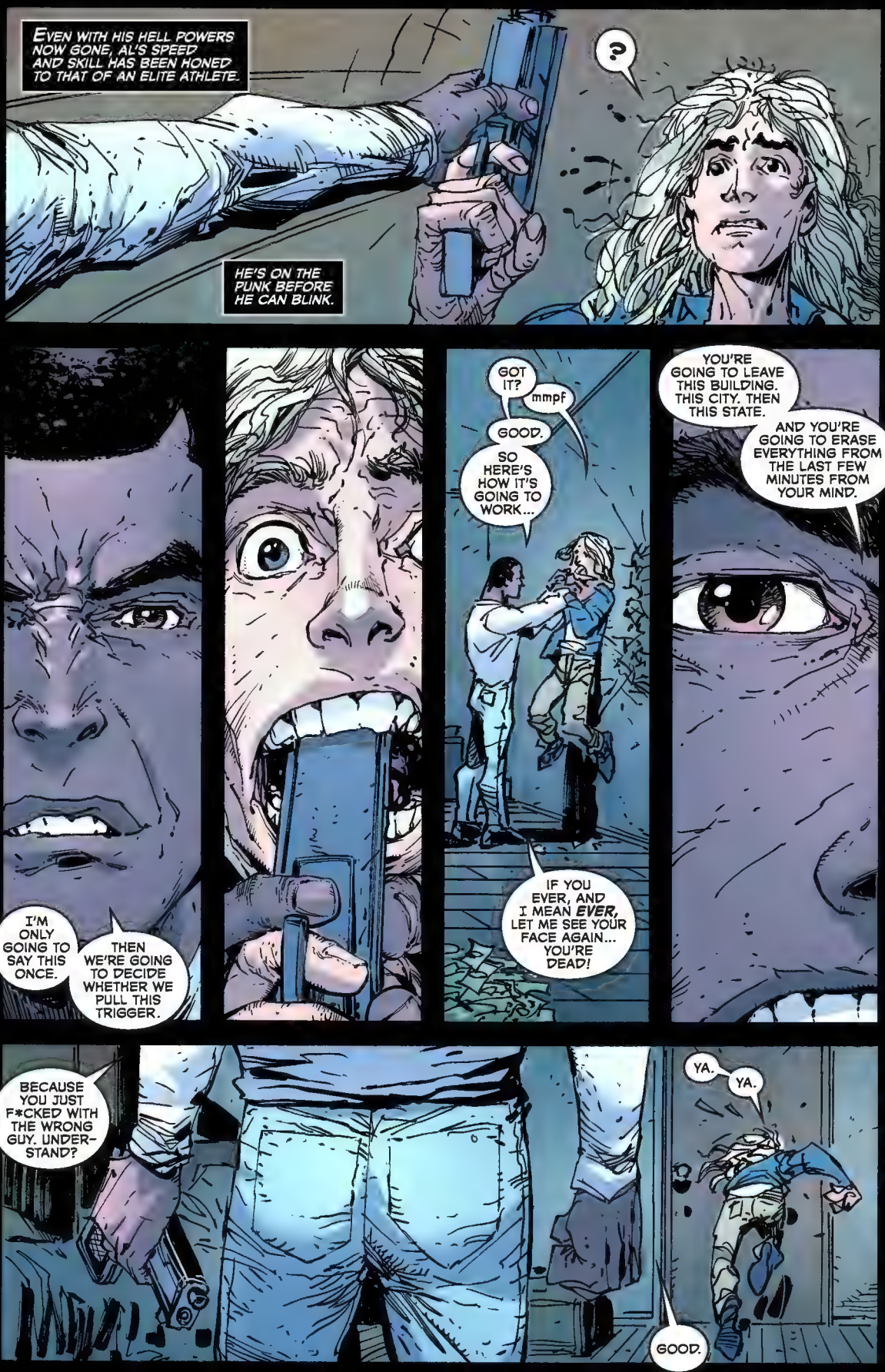
YOU GENTLEMEN READY TO ORDER?
WE NEED A COUPLE MORE MINUTES IF YOU DON'T MIND?

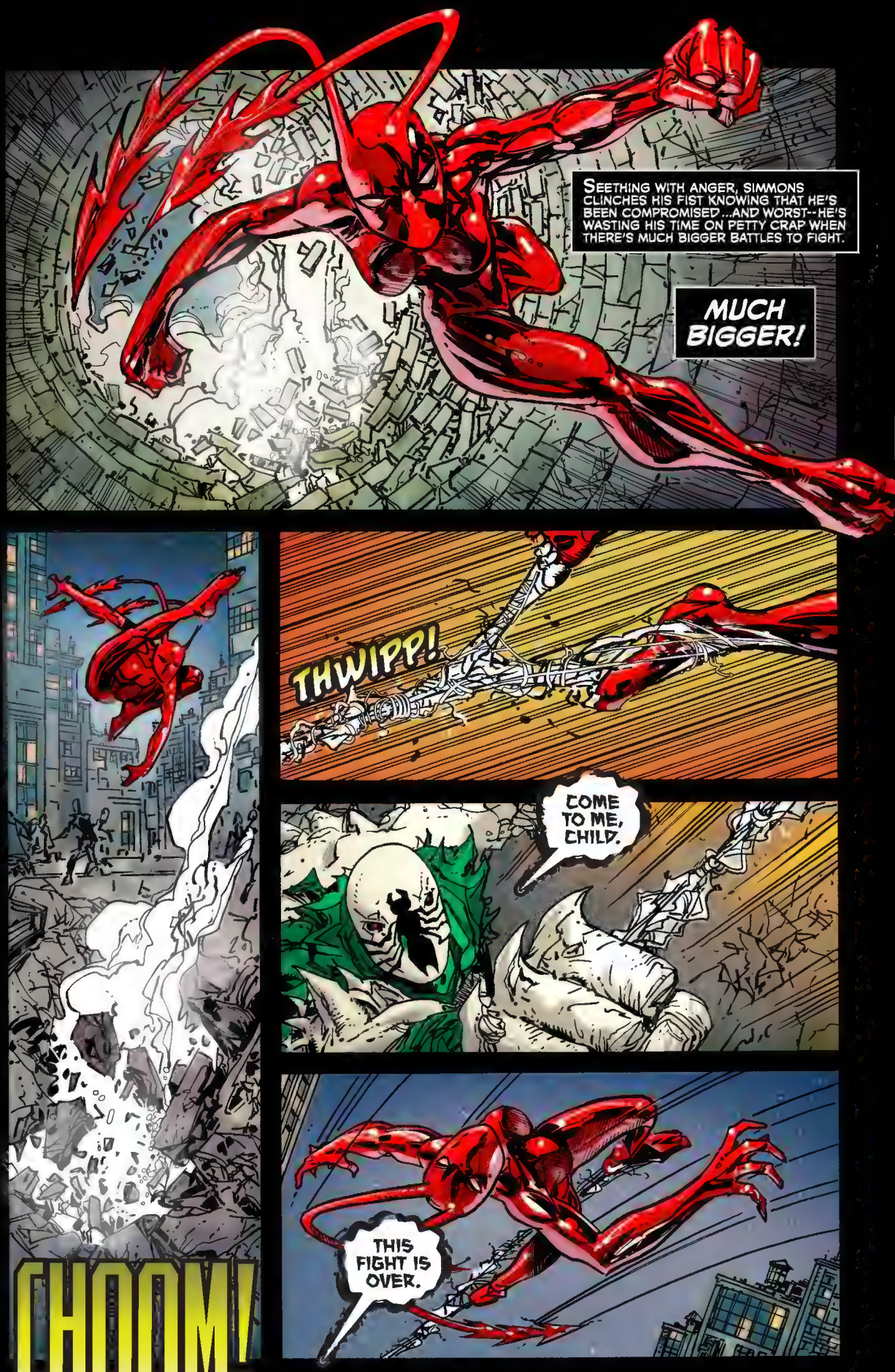
EARL SEEMS TO BE A BIT OF A LOST SOUL. THAT MIGHT BE A GOOD THING.
SO IT WAS 9/11 THAT CAUSED YOU TO JOIN?
YEAH. ME AND A BUNCH OF OTHERS. I COULDN'T STAND BY AND DO NOTHING SO I DID THE ONLY THING THAT MADE SENSE.
I UNDER-STAND.
CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING? YOU MARRIED?
NO.
THOUGHT ABOUT IT ONCE, WITH A SPECTACULAR LADY, BUT I KNEW DEEP DOWN--IN MY GUT--I WASN'T THE MARRYING KIND OF GUY. NOT BECAUSE I WANTED OTHER LADIES. JUST, I DON'T KNOW...
GUESS I JUST NEEDED TO WALK MY OWN PATH. DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD BE FAIR FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO PUT UP WITH ALL I'VE GOT. HOW ABOUT YOU? YOU MARRIED?
USED TO BE. SHE... SHE PASSED AWAY RECENTLY.*
*Issue #262 --Todd
SORRY TO HEAR THAT, AL.
THANKS. BUT, TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOURSELF.
I CONTINUE TO TEST HIM.


BECAUSE IF I'M GOING TO WIN THIS WAR I'M ABOUT TO FIGHT... I'M GOING TO NEED ALLIES.
BRAKKATHOOM!

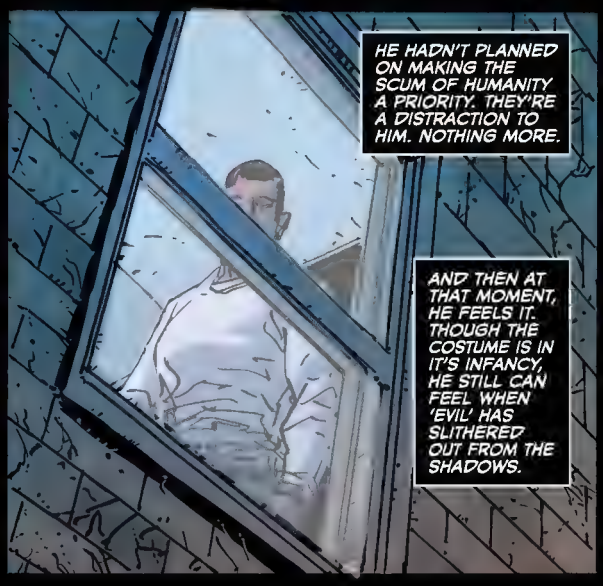
SINCE HIS RECENT RETURN, AL SIMMONS HAS BEEN LIVING IN A SMALL, UNIMPRESSIVE APARTMENT BUILDING. A PLACE WHERE HE CAN ASSESS HOW TO MOVE FORWARD IN HIS PERSONAL 'WAR.'
THE HOPE WAS FOR HIM TO BE ABLE TO "LAY LOW" UNENCUMBERED BY OUTSIDE INFLUENCE. UNFORTUNATELY, THE PROBLEM HASN'T BEEN IN TRYING TO KEEP THE OUTSIDE AWAY, IT'S BEEN AVOIDING THOSE ON THE INSIDE. SPECIFICALLY, SOME OF THOSE LIVING IN THE BUILDING WITH HIM.
LIKE THIS GUY.
HIS NAME DOESN'T MATTER. HE'S JUST A PUNK WHO'S ALWAYS THOUGHT THE WORLD OWED HIM SOMETHING. IT'S NEVER CROSSED HIS MIND THAT HIS LIFE IS A BY-PRODUCT OF HUNDREDS OF SHORT-SIGHTED DECISIONS.
INSTEAD HE ASSUMES HE CAN DO WHATEVER 'FEELS GOOD' AT THE TIME. WHICH IS WHY HE'S NOW--UNINVITED--INSIDE AL SIMMONS' LOFT.
HE'D SEEN SIMMONS CARRYING BUNDLES OF STUFF UP AND DOWN THE STAIRS. HUGE BUNDLES AT A TIME. WONDERING WHY AL NEVER ACCEPTED HIS HELP MOVING SOME OF IT.
SO HE THOUGHT HE'D TAKE A CLOSER LOOK HIMSELF. WHEN HE FOUND A SUITCASE HE PRAYED IT MIGHT BE THE ANSWER TO HIS DREAMS...
IN WHATEVER FORM THAT MIGHT BE.
CASH BEING THE BEST FORM!

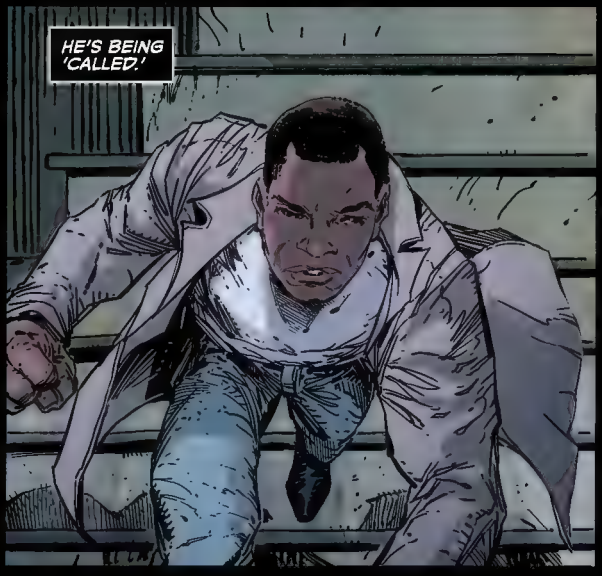
Holy
shit.
MUST BE TWENTY GRAND HERE.
WRAMM
THAK
WHO THE F*CK ARE YOU?!
DUDE...
BACK THE F*CK OFF!
NOW!
BEFORE I BLOW YOUR GODDAMN HEAD APART!


EVEN WITH HIS HELL POWERS NOW GONE, AL'S SPEED AND SKILL HAS BEEN HONED TO THAT OF AN ELITE ATHLETE.
?
HE'S ON THE PUNK BEFORE HE CAN BLINK.
I'M ONLY GOING TO SAY THIS ONCE.
THEN WE'RE GOING TO DECIDE WHETHER WE PULL THIS TRIGGER.
GOT IT?
mmpf
GOOD.
SO HERE'S HOW IT'S GOING TO WORK...
IF YOU EVER, AND I MEAN EVER, LET ME SEE YOUR FACE AGAIN... YOU'RE DEAD!
YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE THIS BUILDING. THIS CITY. THEN THIS STATE.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO ERASE EVERYTHING FROM THE LAST FEW MINUTES FROM YOUR MIND.
BECAUSE YOU JUST F*CKED WITH THE WRONG GUY. UNDER-STAND?
YA.
YA.
GOOD.


SEETHING WITH ANGER, SIMMONS CLINCHES HIS FIST KNOWING THAT HE'S BEEN COMPROMISED...AND WORST--HE'S WASTING HIS TIME ON PETTY CRAP WHEN THERE'S MUCH BIGGER BATTLES TO FIGHT.
MUCH BIGGER!
THWIPP!
COME TO ME, CHILD.
THIS FIGHT IS OVER.
CHOOM!

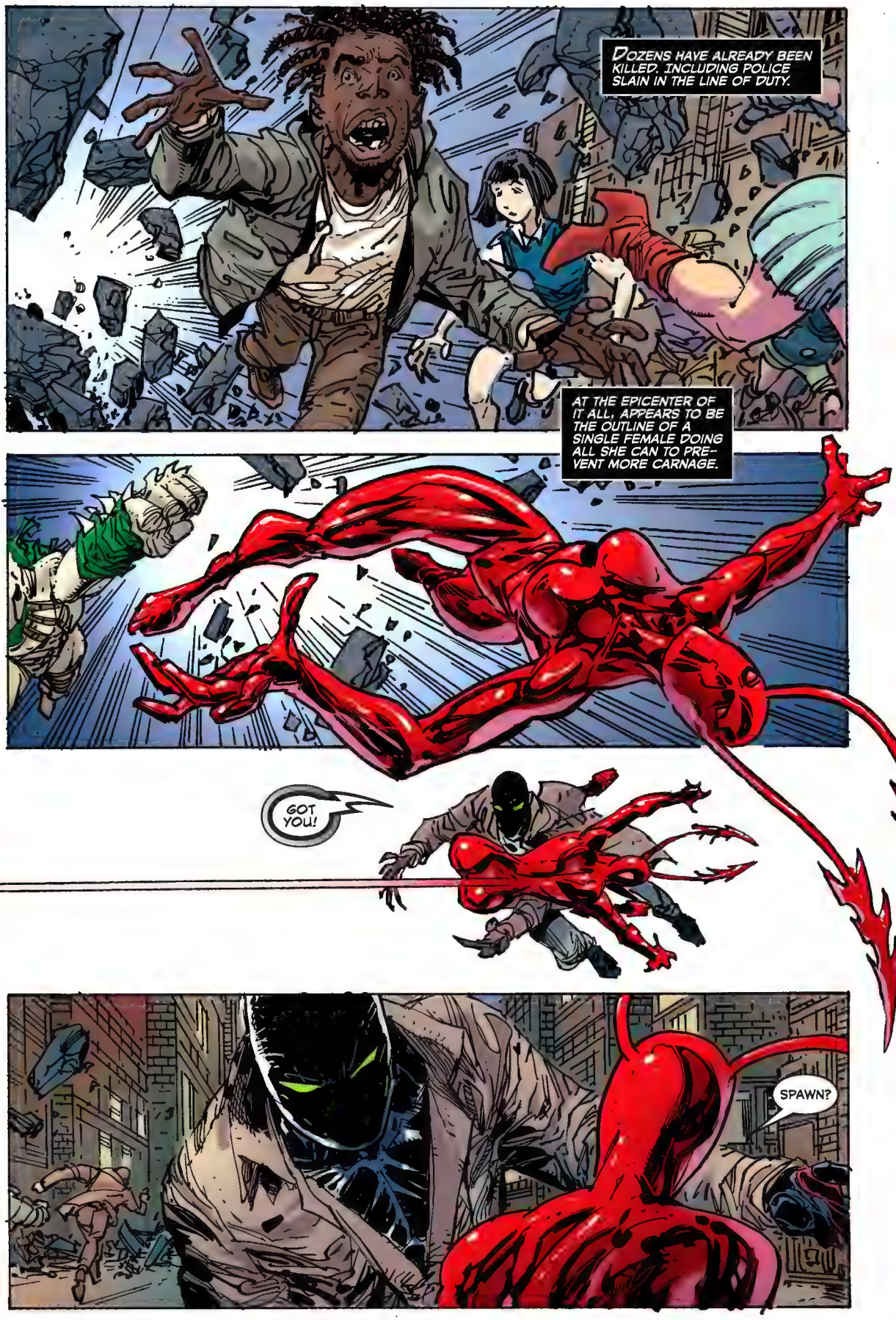
He'd hoped things would be... different. That he wouldn't have to hide himself all the time. That maybe he'd have a small sliver of normality in his life. So he could rest. Because he knows-- soon--he'll be tested himself.

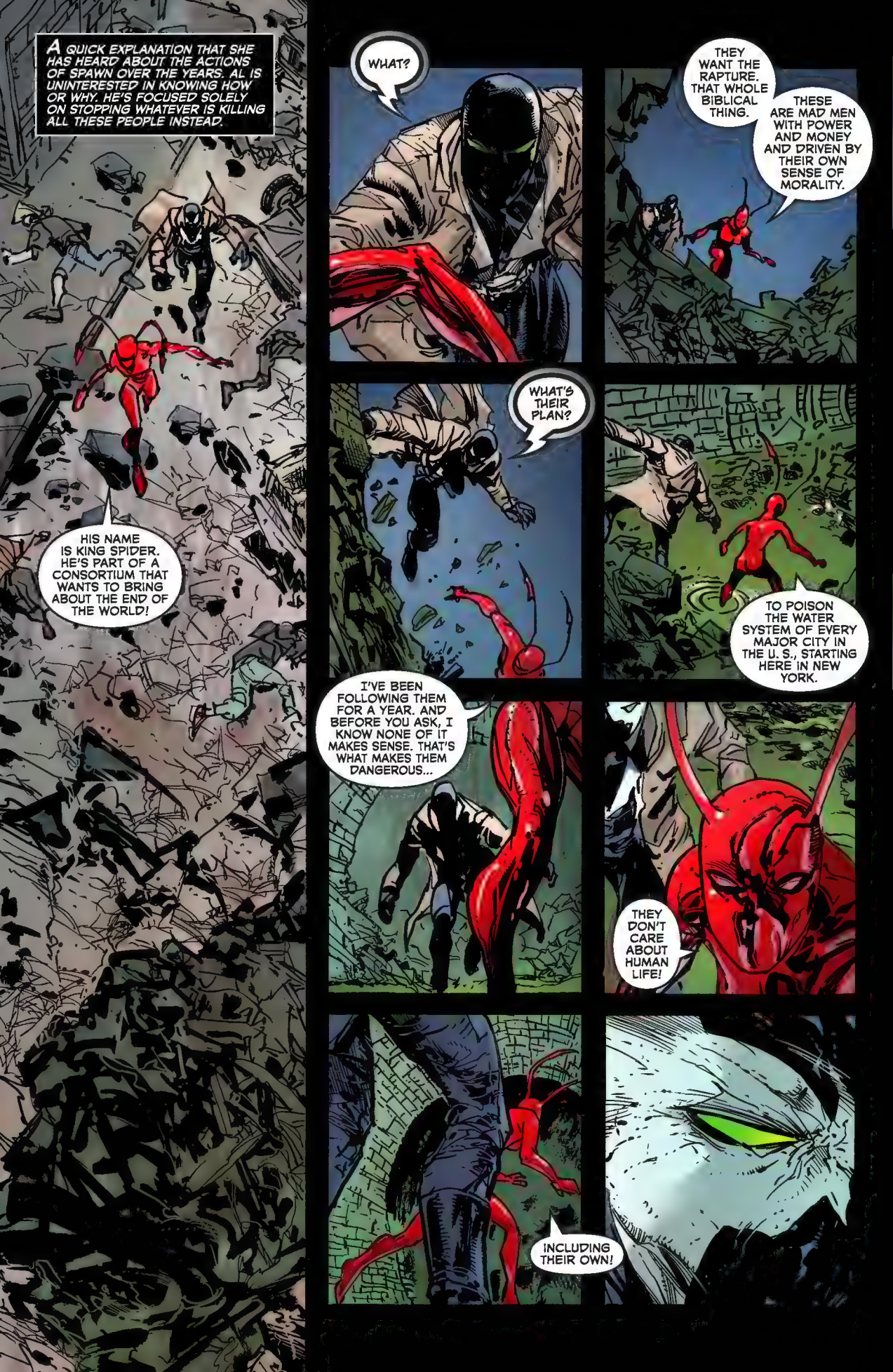

He hadn't planned on making the scum of humanity a priority. They're a distraction to him. Nothing more.
And then at that moment, he feels it. Though the costume is in it's infancy, he still can feel when 'evil' has slithered out from the shadows.


He's being 'called.'

It takes him fifteen minutes to get there. By the time he does...

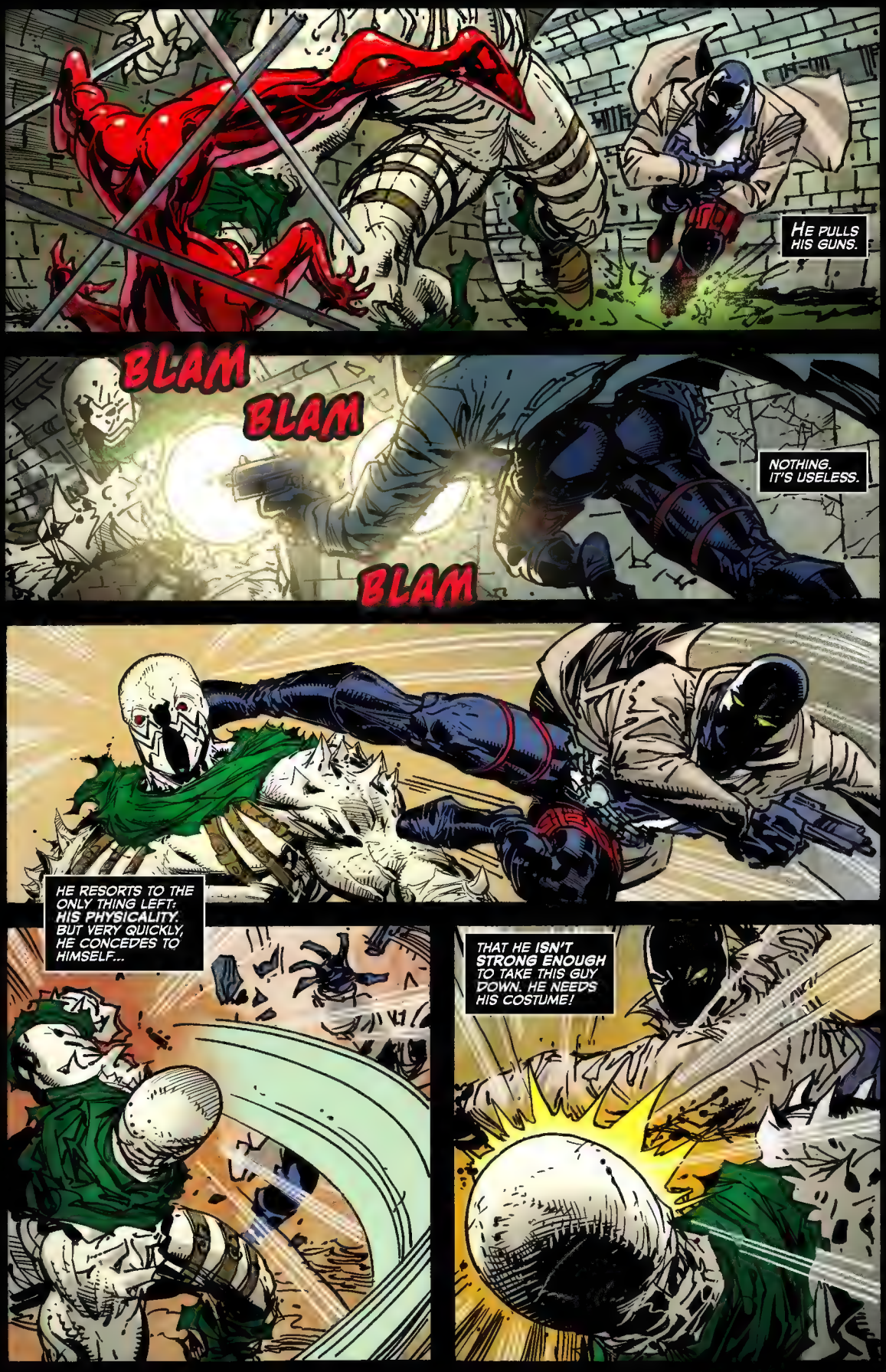
He knows this is why he has to be SPAWN!


DOZENS HAVE ALREADY BEEN KILLED. INCLUDING POLICE SLAIN IN THE LINE OF DUTY.
AT THE EPICENTER OF IT ALL, APPEARS TO BE THE OUTLINE OF A SINGLE FEMALE DOING ALL SHE CAN TO PREVENT MORE CARNAGE.
GOT YOU!
SPAWN?


A QUICK EXPLANATION THAT SHE HAS HEARD ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF SPAWN OVER THE YEARS. AL IS UNINTERESTED IN KNOWING HOW OR WHY. HE'S FOCUSED SOLELY ON STOPPING WHATEVER IS KILLING ALL THESE PEOPLE INSTEAD.
HIS NAME IS KING SPIDER. HE'S PART OF A CONSORTIUM THAT WANTS TO BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD!
WHAT?
THEY WANT THE RAPTURE. THAT WHOLE BIBLICAL THING.
THESE ARE MAD MEN WITH POWER AND MONEY AND DRIVEN BY THEIR OWN SENSE OF MORALITY.
WHAT'S THEIR PLAN?
TO POISON THE WATER SYSTEM OF EVERY MAJOR CITY IN THE U. S., STARTING HERE IN NEW YORK.
I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING THEM FOR A YEAR. AND BEFORE YOU ASK, I KNOW NONE OF IT MAKES SENSE. THAT'S WHAT MAKES THEM DANGEROUS...
THEY DON'T CARE ABOUT HUMAN LIFE!
INCLUDING THEIR OWN!

AND SO... AL'S TEST STARTS!
HUMANS.
CRAZY SHITS.
SUPER-VILLAINS.

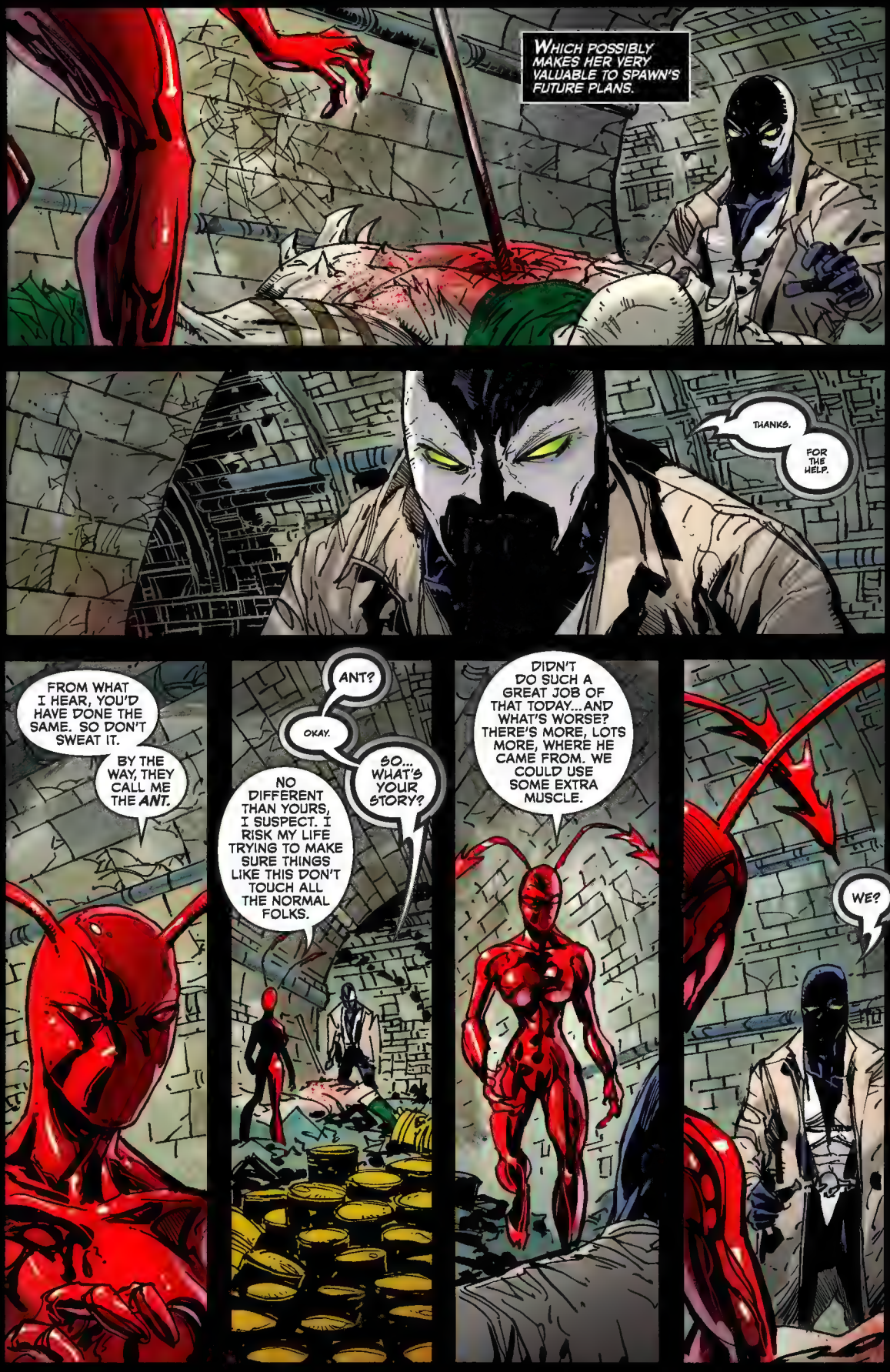
DEMONS.
ANGELS.
HE'S GOING TO HAVE TO EVENTUALLY DEAL WITH THEM ALL! THIS--WHAT HE SEES IN FRONT OF HIM TONIGHT--IS JUST THE BEGINNING!!

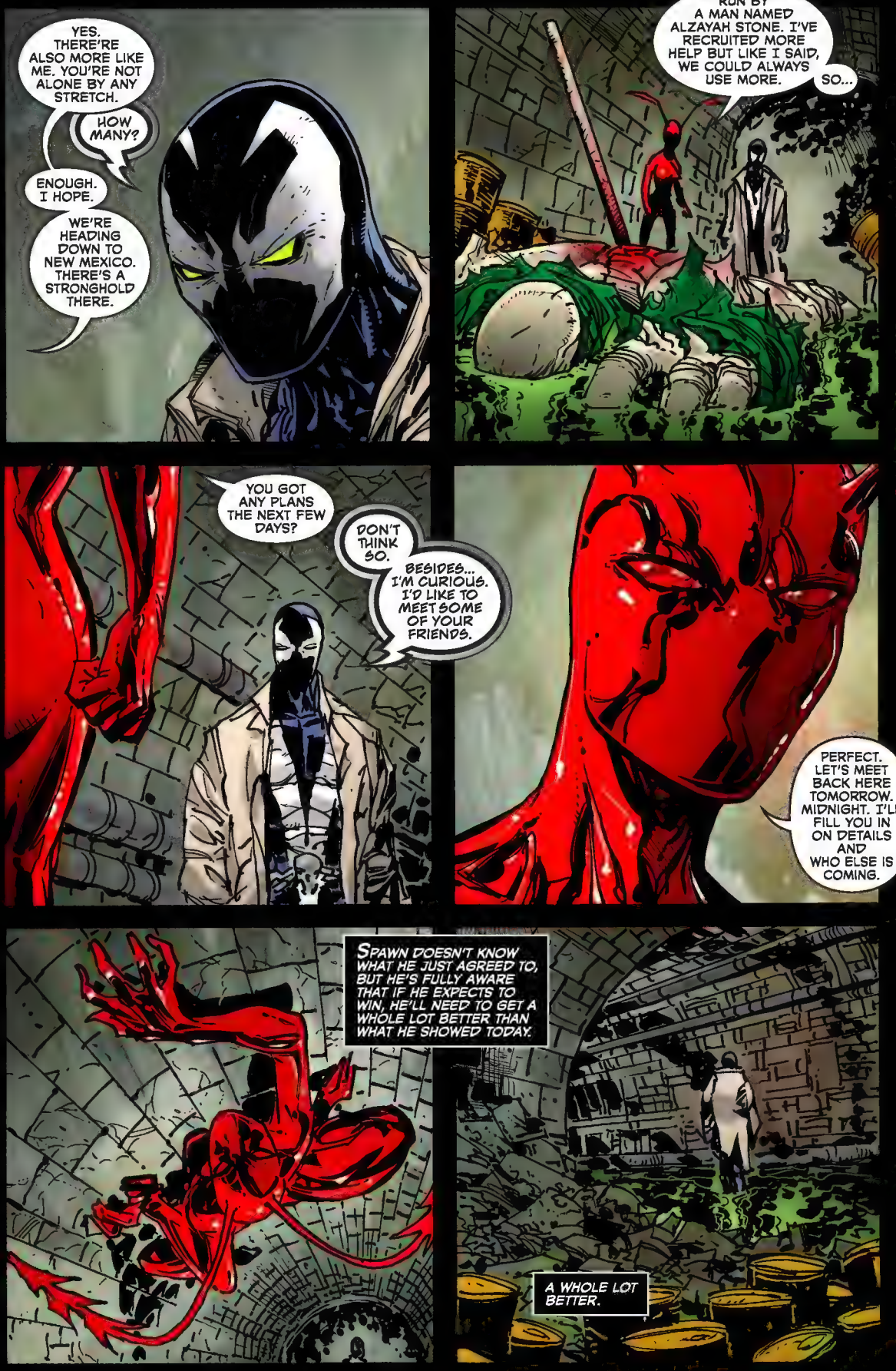

He pulls his guns.
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
Nothing. It's useless.
He resorts to the only thing left: his physicality. But very quickly, he concedes to himself...
That he isn't strong enough to take this guy down. He needs his costume!

OR AT LEAST... HE NEEDS A PORTION OF IT TO RESPOND. IT DOES, AS CHAINS LASH OUT WITH PRECISION.
UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S ONLY A SHORT DISTRACTION, SHOWING HOW TRULY FRAGILE THE SUIT REALLY IS.
AND SO HAND TO HAND IS ALL THAT'S LEFT.
THEN SUDDENLY, IT ENDS!

SHANK!
LEAVE HIM ALONE!

HER STRIKE IS QUICK, VICIOUS AND LETHAL!
SHE'S UNFAZED BY THE DEADLY PAIN SHE'S INFLICTED, WHICH TELLS US THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME SHE'S DONE THIS.
KRAMM!

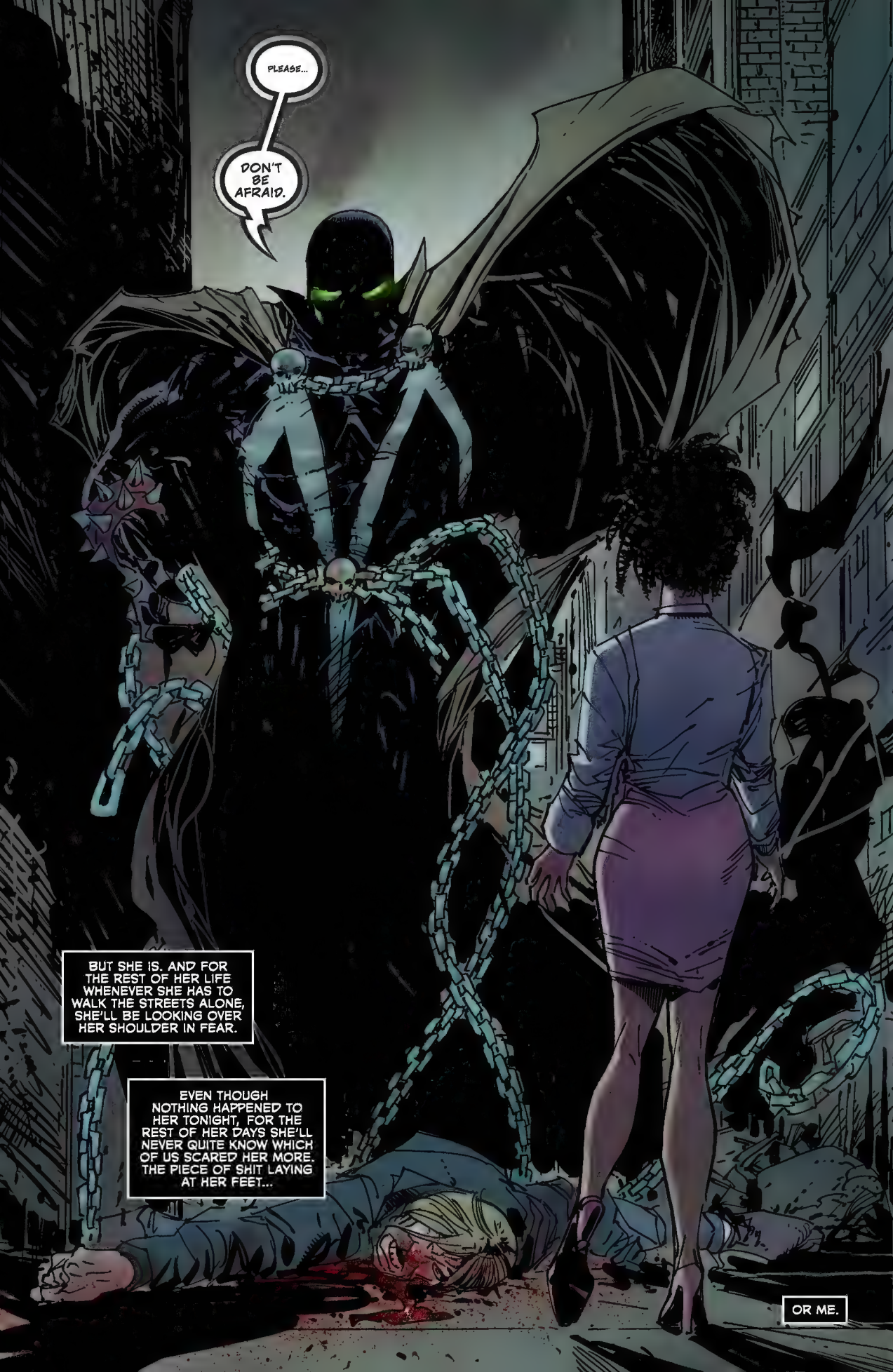

WHICH POSSIBLY MAKES HER VERY VALUABLE TO SPAWN'S FUTURE PLANS.
THANKS.
FOR THE HELP.
FROM WHAT I HEAR, YOU'D HAVE DONE THE SAME. SO DON'T SWEAT IT.
BY THE WAY, THEY CALL ME THE ANT.
NO DIFFERENT THAN YOURS, I SUSPECT. I RISK MY LIFE TRYING TO MAKE SURE THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T TOUCH ALL THE NORMAL FOLKS.
ANT?
OKAY.
SO... WHAT'S YOUR STORY?
DIDN'T DO SUCH A GREAT JOB OF THAT TODAY...AND WHAT'S WORSE? THERE'S MORE, LOTS MORE, WHERE HE CAME FROM. WE COULD USE SOME EXTRA MUSCLE.
WE?


YES. THERE'RE ALSO MORE LIKE ME. YOU'RE NOT ALONE BY ANY STRETCH.
HOW MANY?
ENOUGH. I HOPE.
WE'RE HEADING DOWN TO NEW MEXICO. THERE'S A STRONGHOLD THERE.
RUN BY A MAN NAMED ALZAYAH STONE. I'VE RECRUITED MORE HELP BUT LIKE I SAID, WE COULD ALWAYS USE MORE.
SO...
YOU GOT ANY PLANS THE NEXT FEW DAYS?
DON'T THINK SO.
BESIDES... I'M CURIOUS. I'D LIKE TO MEET SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS.
PERFECT. LET'S MEET BACK HERE TOMORROW. MIDNIGHT. I'LL FILL YOU IN ON DETAILS AND WHO ELSE IS COMING.
SPAWN DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE JUST AGREED TO, BUT HE'S FULLY AWARE THAT IF HE EXPECTS TO WIN, HE'LL NEED TO GET A WHOLE LOT BETTER THAN WHAT HE SHOWED TODAY.
A WHOLE LOT BETTER.

SPAWN
Todd FCO
image
266

EAT
MAX'S DIN
MIDNIGHT. AND SHE DIDN'T SHOW.
WORSE, I HAD NO WAY OF CONTACTING HER.

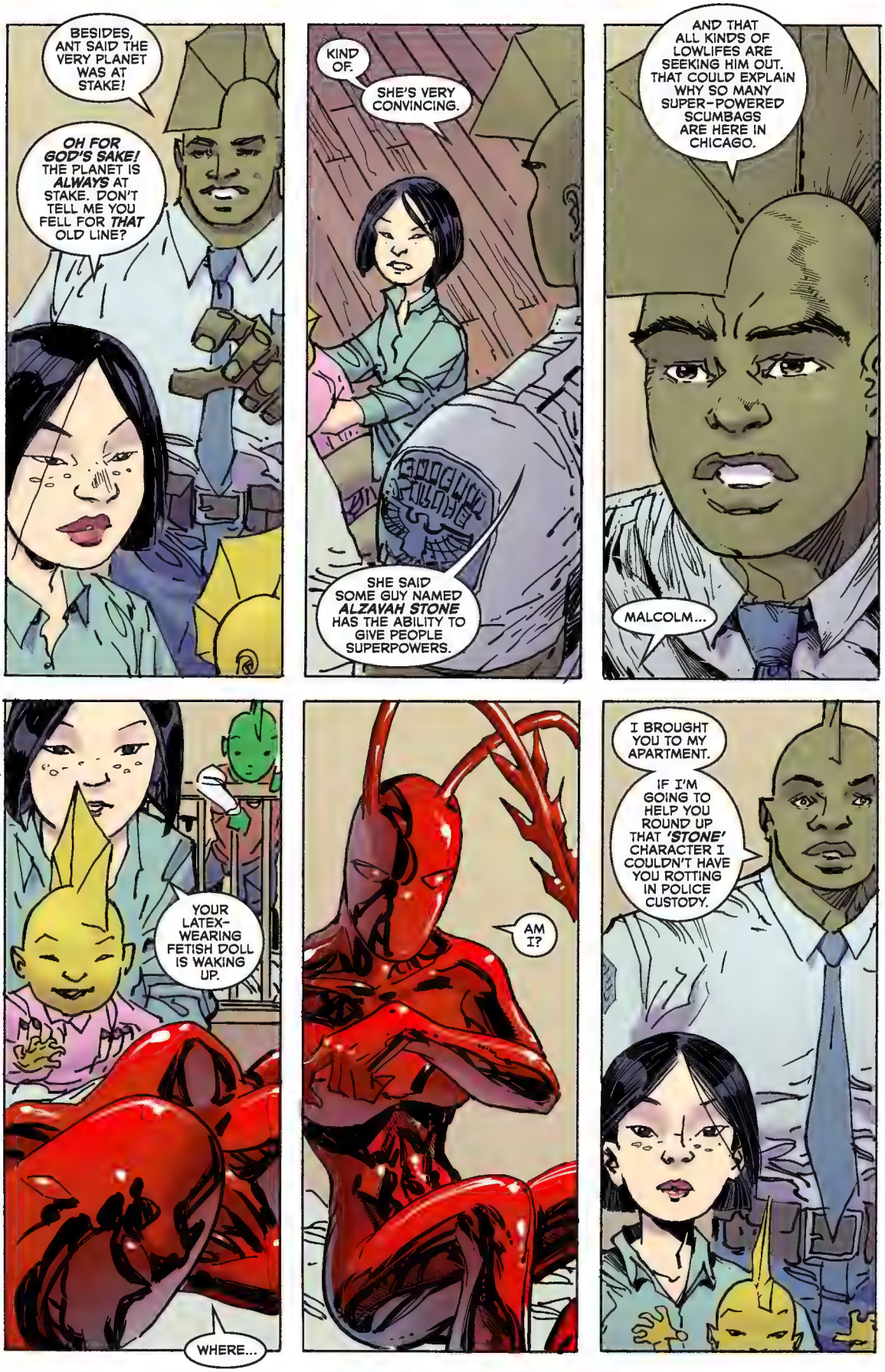
BUT IT WAS FINE. I HAD OTHER THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF.
I'M GETTING SO FED UP WITH PEOPLE DISAPPEARING IN MY LIFE... AND I'LL BE DAMNED IF I'M GOING TO LET OTHERS HAVE THOSE SAME FEELINGS.
KRAKK
NOT NOW. *NOT EVER!* ESPECIALLY NOT WITH PUNKS LIKE THIS.


PLEASE...
DON'T BE AFRAID.
BUT SHE IS. AND FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE WHENEVER SHE HAS TO WALK THE STREETS ALONE, SHE'LL BE LOOKING OVER HER SHOULDER IN FEAR.
EVEN THOUGH NOTHING HAPPENED TO HER TONIGHT, FOR THE REST OF HER DAYS SHE'LL NEVER QUITE KNOW WHICH OF US SCARED HER MORE. THE PIECE OF SHIT LAYING AT HER FEET...
OR ME.

WHY'D YOU BRING HER HERE? IT'S NOT SAFE.
I HAD NO CHOICE, MAXINE!
DIDN'T WANT TO TAKE HER TO THE POLICE STATION. WHO KNOWS WHERE THAT WOULD HAVE LED.
I DIDN'T WANT HER GETTING LOCKED UP OR HAVING HER SECRET IDENTITY REVEALED. AND DON'T GIVE ME THAT "BUT YOU'RE A COP" LOOK!

I JUST DON'T WANT YOU GETTING INTO TROUBLE. YOU NEED THIS JOB, MALCOLM. AND YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT THIS FAMILY.
INSTEAD OF YOUR ADDICTION TO VIDEO GAMES, COMICS AND PORNOGRAPHY.

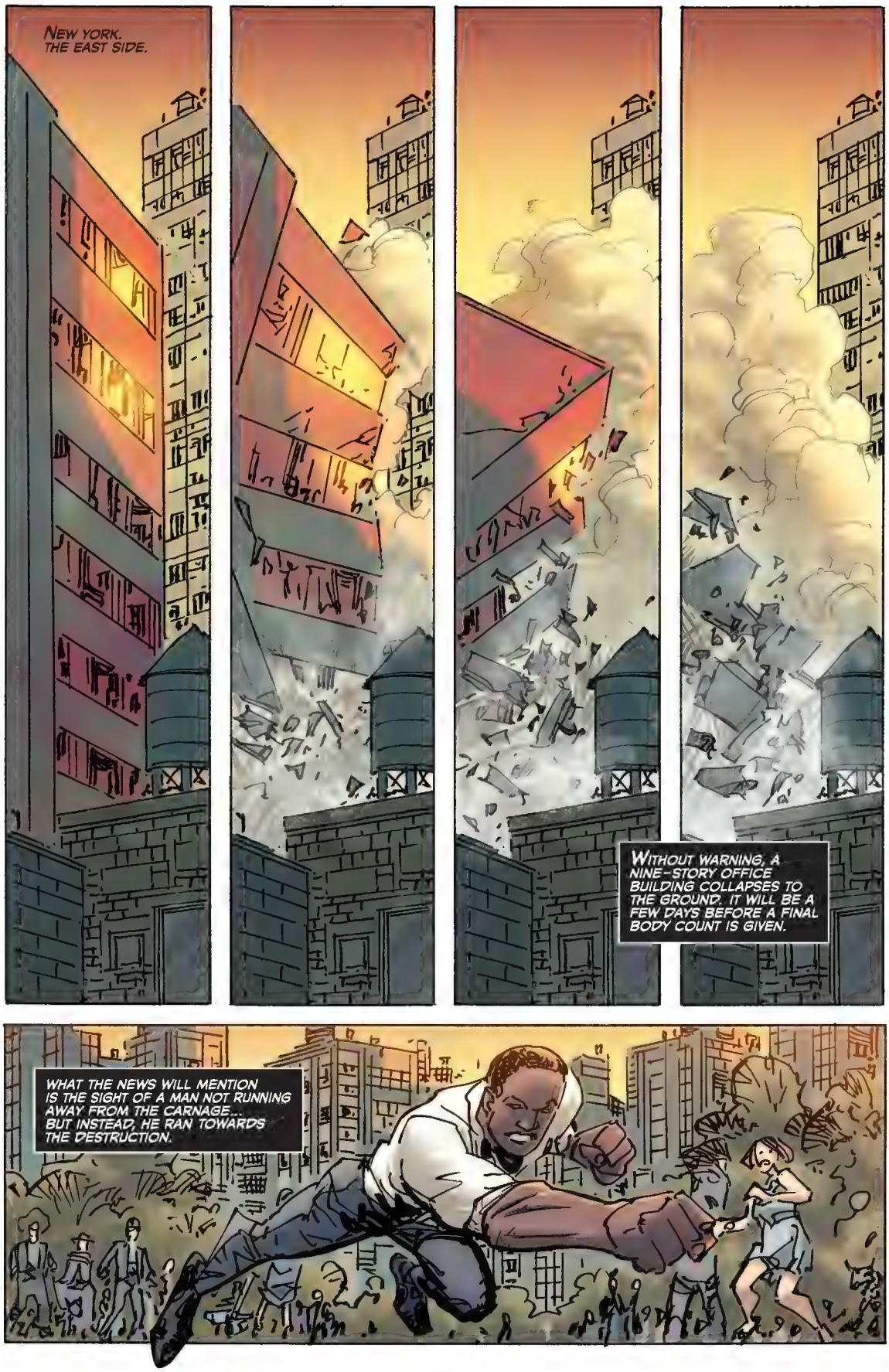
I CAN'T LET HER FALL INTO THE WRONG HANDS! THERE'S A SUPER-HERO CODE.
SHE'S NOT GOING TO HURT THE KIDS OR ANYTHING!
AND I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE ANYPLACE ELSE TO TAKE HER.

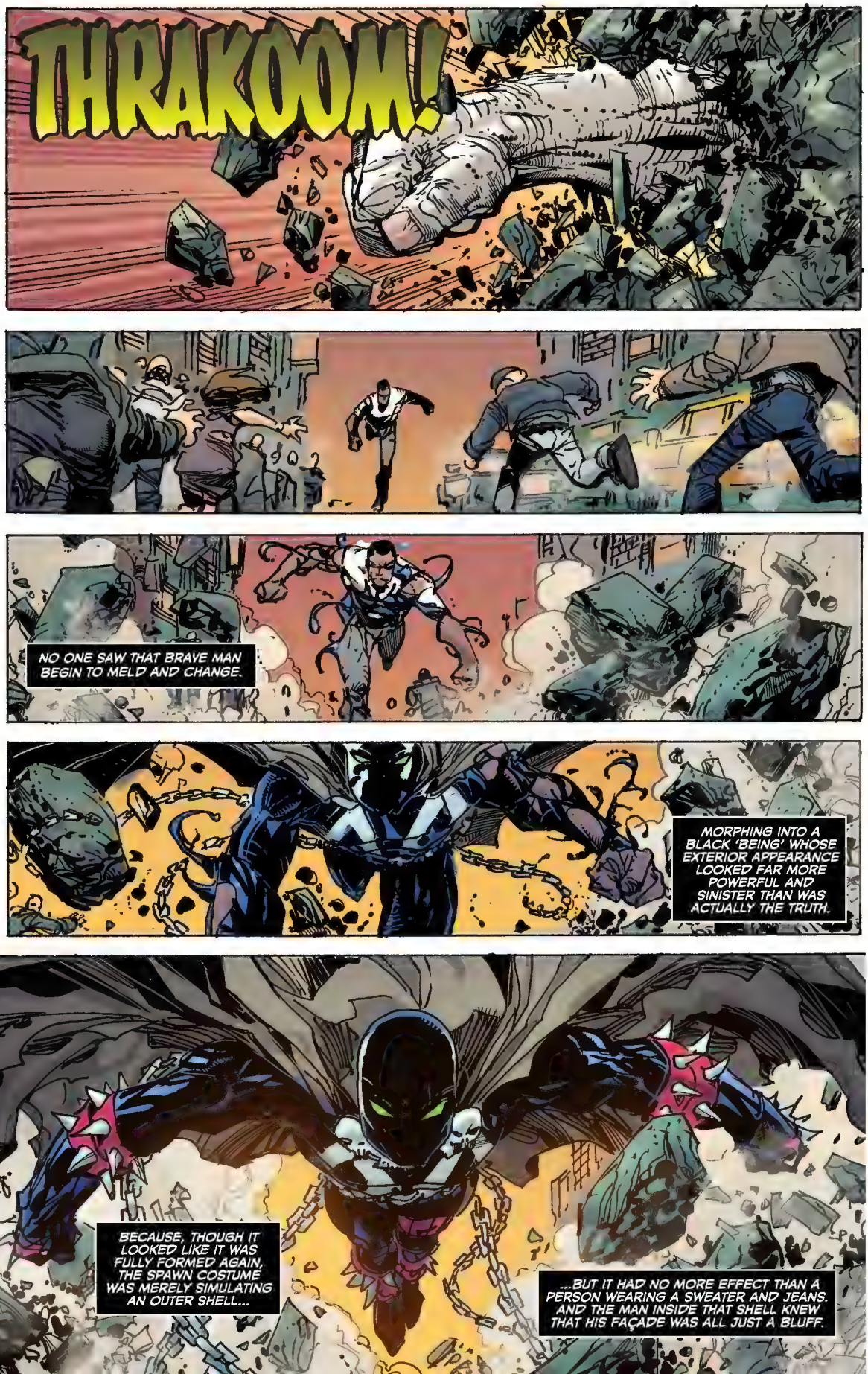

BESIDES, ANT SAID THE VERY PLANET WAS AT STAKE!
OH FOR GOD'S SAKE! THE PLANET IS ALWAYS AT STAKE. DON'T TELL ME YOU FELL FOR THAT OLD LINE?
KIND OF.
SHE'S VERY CONVINCING.
SHE SAID SOME GUY NAMED ALZAVAH STONE HAS THE ABILITY TO GIVE PEOPLE SUPERPOWERS.
AND THAT ALL KINDS OF LOWLIFES ARE SEEKING HIM OUT. THAT COULD EXPLAIN WHY SO MANY SUPER-POWERED SCUMBAGS ARE HERE IN CHICAGO.
MALCOLM...
YOUR LATEX-WEARING FETISH DOLL IS WAKING UP.
WHERE...
AM I?
I BROUGHT YOU TO MY APARTMENT.
IF I'M GOING TO HELP YOU ROUND UP THAT 'STONE' CHARACTER I COULDN'T HAVE YOU ROTTING IN POLICE CUSTODY.

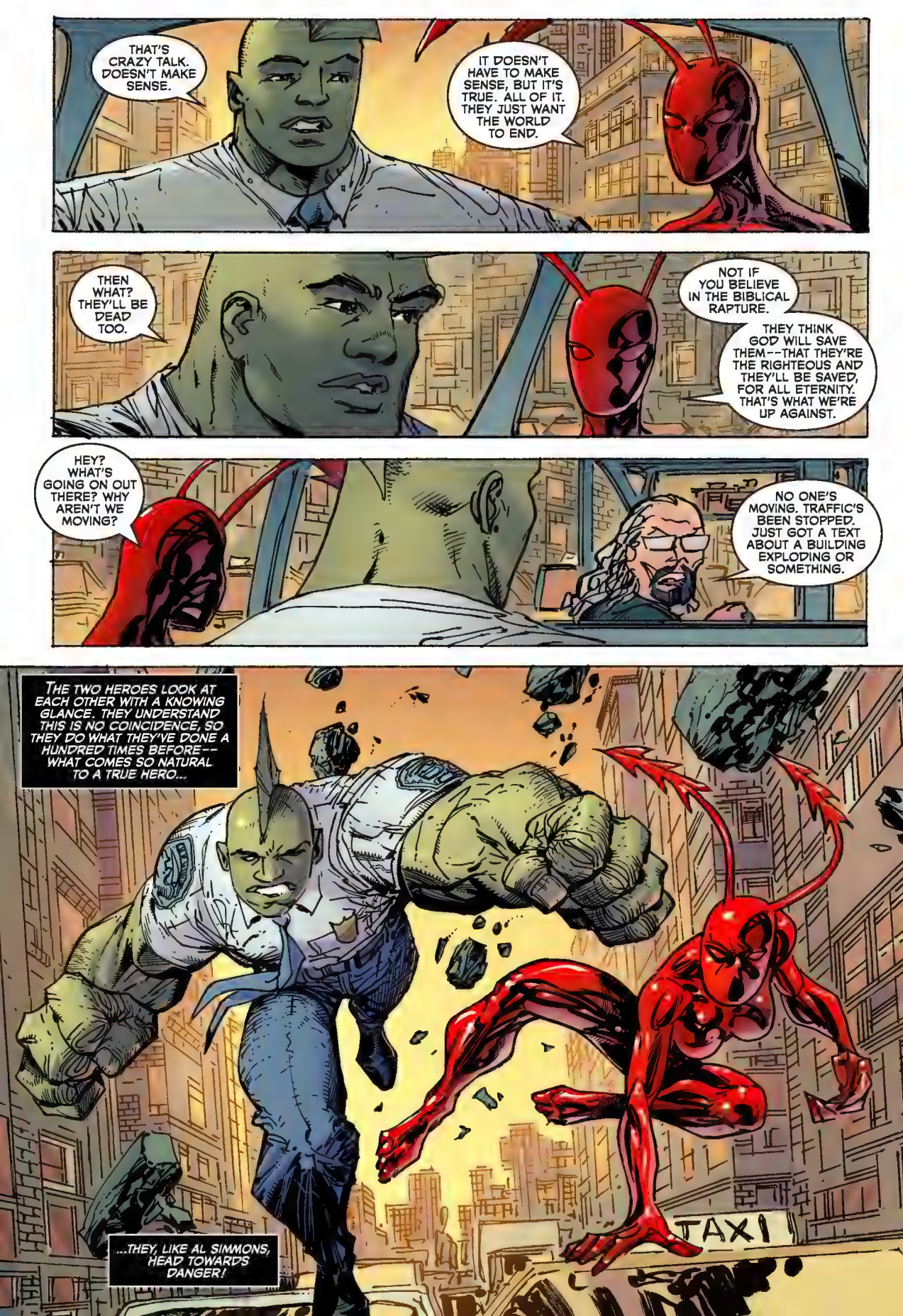
BANG BANG BANG
OPEN UP! I KNOW YOU'RE IN THERE!
BANG BANG
HANG ON, I'M COMING.
LENNY?
WHERE'S MY LENNY? HE'S MISSING. HAVE YOU SEEN HIM?!
NO. CAN'T SAY I HAVE.*
*Actually, Al did, last issue.--Todd
HE WAS NO SAINT, MY LENNY-- BUT HE WAS GOOD TO BILLY AND HE HELPED SPLIT THE RENT WITH ME. WHAT AM I GOING TO DO NOW? RENT'S DUE! HE PROMISED HE'D GET THE MONEY.
BUT NOW HE'S GONE.
I'M SURE HE'LL TURN UP. HAVE YOU ASKED THE OTHER NEIGHBORS?
ALL OF THEM! THEY DON'T KNOW NOTHING! BUT HE TALKED ABOUT YOU SOME.
LIKE I SAID, I HAVEN'T SEEN HIM. NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.
SHE'LL FIGURE OUT SHE'S BETTER OFF WITHOUT HIM. IT'S JUST GOING TO TAKE HER A LITTLE TIME. BECAUSE EVEN ASSHOLES CAN CHARM THEIR WAY INTO PEOPLE'S HEARTS.

"WHAT *AM* I DOING?
"THIS IS CRAZY. I DON'T EVEN KNOW HER.
"OR IF EVERYTHING THE ANT HAS TOLD ME IS EVEN *TRUE.*"
THIS YOUR FIRST TRIP TO THE BIG CITY?
'CAUSE THAT'S WHERE ALL THE ACTION IS. NEW YORK CITY! *THE BIG APPLE!*
PROBABLY NOT, RIGHT? I'M SURE YOU GO THERE ALL THE TIME.
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO THERE? SAVE THE WORLD AND ALL US 'LITTLE' PEOPLE. THAT SORT OF THING?
I'VE BEEN THERE PLENTY OF TIMES.
EVEN WHEN OSAMA BIN LADEN CAME BACK AS A GIANT RADIATION MONSTER.
SEE... TOLD YOU! HE'S BEEN THERE BEFORE.
THIS IS SO EXCITING.
CAN I GET YOU ANYTHING?
NO THANKS. I'M GOOD.
GOOD? C'MON, YOU'RE *GREAT!* YOU'RE A GREAT MAN!
NOT LIKE YOUR FATHER THOUGH. NO GOOD BUM!
NO DISRESPECT.
"I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THIS WHOLE TRIP IS A MISTAKE. AND I DON'T KNOW HOW LONG I'M GOING TO BE ABLE TO PUT UP WITH THIS GUY."

"WOW! THAT SEEMED LIKE THE LONGEST TRIP I'VE EVER MADE. MAN, COULD THAT GUY TALK!"
HEY... MALCOLM DRAGON!
YOU NEED A LIFT, BIG SHOT?
SURE.
WHERE'RE YOU HEADING?
DON'T KNOW. I WAS SUPPOSED TO MEET SOMEONE BUT SHE DIDN'T...
GET IN.
I'M NOT LETTING YOU OUT OF MY SIGHT.
BAP
WHATEVER. LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH.
PERFECT. FREDDY, YOU KNOW THE SPOT WE'RE GOING TO?
GOT IT.


NEW YORK.
THE EAST SIDE.
WITHOUT WARNING, A NINE-STORY OFFICE BUILDING COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND. IT WILL BE A FEW DAYS BEFORE A FINAL BODY COUNT IS GIVEN.
WHAT THE NEWS WILL MENTION IS THE SIGHT OF A MAN NOT RUNNING AWAY FROM THE CARNAGE... BUT INSTEAD, HE RAN TOWARDS THE DESTRUCTION.


THRAKOOM!
NO ONE SAW THAT BRAVE MAN BEGIN TO MELD AND CHANGE.
MORPHING INTO A BLACK 'BEING' WHOSE EXTERIOR APPEARANCE LOOKED FAR MORE POWERFUL AND SINISTER THAN WAS ACTUALLY THE TRUTH.
BECAUSE, THOUGH IT LOOKED LIKE IT WAS FULLY FORMED AGAIN, THE SPAWN COSTUME WAS MERELY SIMULATING AN OUTER SHELL...
...BUT IT HAD NO MORE EFFECT THAN A PERSON WEARING A SWEATER AND JEANS. AND THE MAN INSIDE THAT SHELL KNEW THAT HIS FAÇADE WAS ALL JUST A BLUFF.


THAT'S CRAZY TALK. DOESN'T MAKE SENSE.
IT DOESN'T HAVE TO MAKE SENSE, BUT IT'S TRUE. ALL OF IT. THEY JUST WANT THE WORLD TO END.
THEN WHAT? THEY'LL BE DEAD TOO.
NOT IF YOU BELIEVE IN THE BIBLICAL RAPTURE.
THEY THINK GOD WILL SAVE THEM--THAT THEY'RE THE RIGHTEOUS AND THEY'LL BE SAVED, FOR ALL ETERNITY. THAT'S WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.
HEY? WHAT'S GOING ON OUT THERE? WHY AREN'T WE MOVING?
NO ONE'S MOVING. TRAFFIC'S BEEN STOPPED. JUST GOT A TEXT ABOUT A BUILDING EXPLODING OR SOMETHING.
THE TWO HEROES LOOK AT EACH OTHER WITH A KNOWING GLANCE. THEY UNDERSTAND THIS IS NO COINCIDENCE, SO THEY DO WHAT THEY'VE DONE A HUNDRED TIMES BEFORE--WHAT COMES SO NATURAL TO A TRUE HERO...
...THEY, LIKE AL SIMMONS, HEAD TOWARDS DANGER!
TAXI

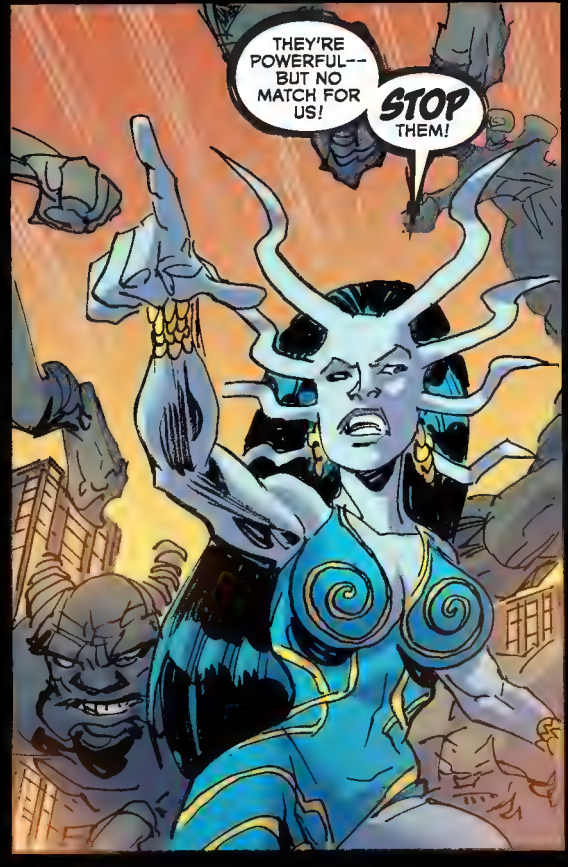
When they arrive, it's far worse than either could imagine. The catastrophic damage from the fallen structure. The scene of carnage of mutilated bodies of so many innocents, and dozens of animal-like creatures pouring out of the epicenter's crevice.

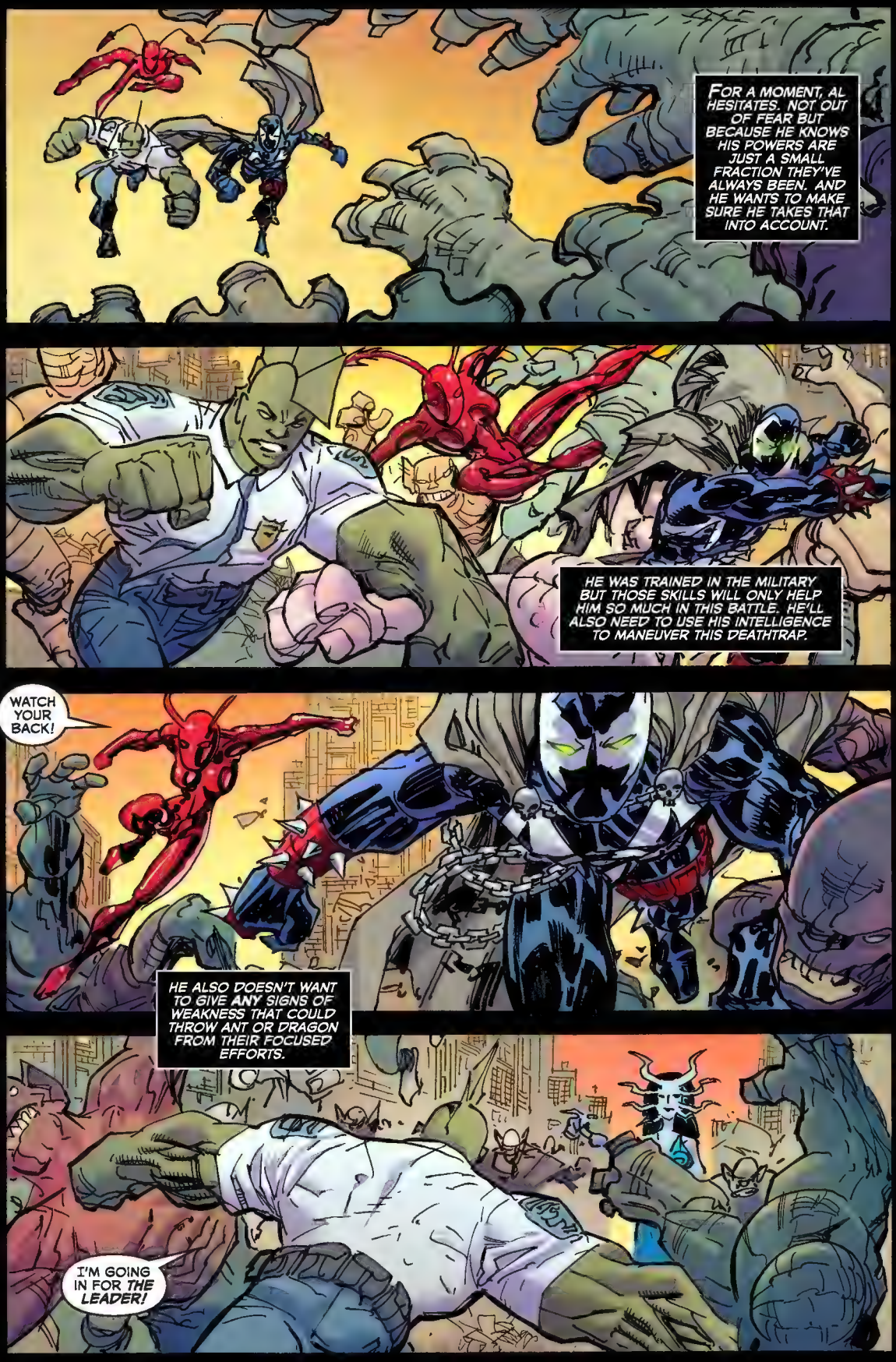
STOP THEM, MY ARMY. THEN BRING THEM TO ME!
MONSTRESS COMMANDS YOU!
THEY ALSO SEE THE CLOAKED HERO SPAWN ACROSS THE STREET. AND WHEN HE NOTICES THEM, THEY COLLECTIVELY KNOW THEY CAN USE AS MUCH HELP AS POSSIBLE.

ANT HAD MENTIONED THE MAGNITUDE OF WHAT SHE HAS BEEN FIGHTING AGAINST, BUT WHEN SHE DIDN'T SHOW FOR HER MEETING WITH SPAWN, HE THOUGHT HE HAD BEEN CONNED. BUT NOW HE SEES IT'S WORSE THAN SHE DESCRIBED.
SHE HAD MENTIONED THE "OTHERS." THIS LOOKS TO BE ONE OF THEM.

THEN SPAWN RECALLS; THIS IS THE MAN THEY CALL 'DRAGON.' AL MET HIS DAD YEARS AGO IN A BIZARRE CONFRONTATION IN HELL.*
*Way back in issue 52--TODD

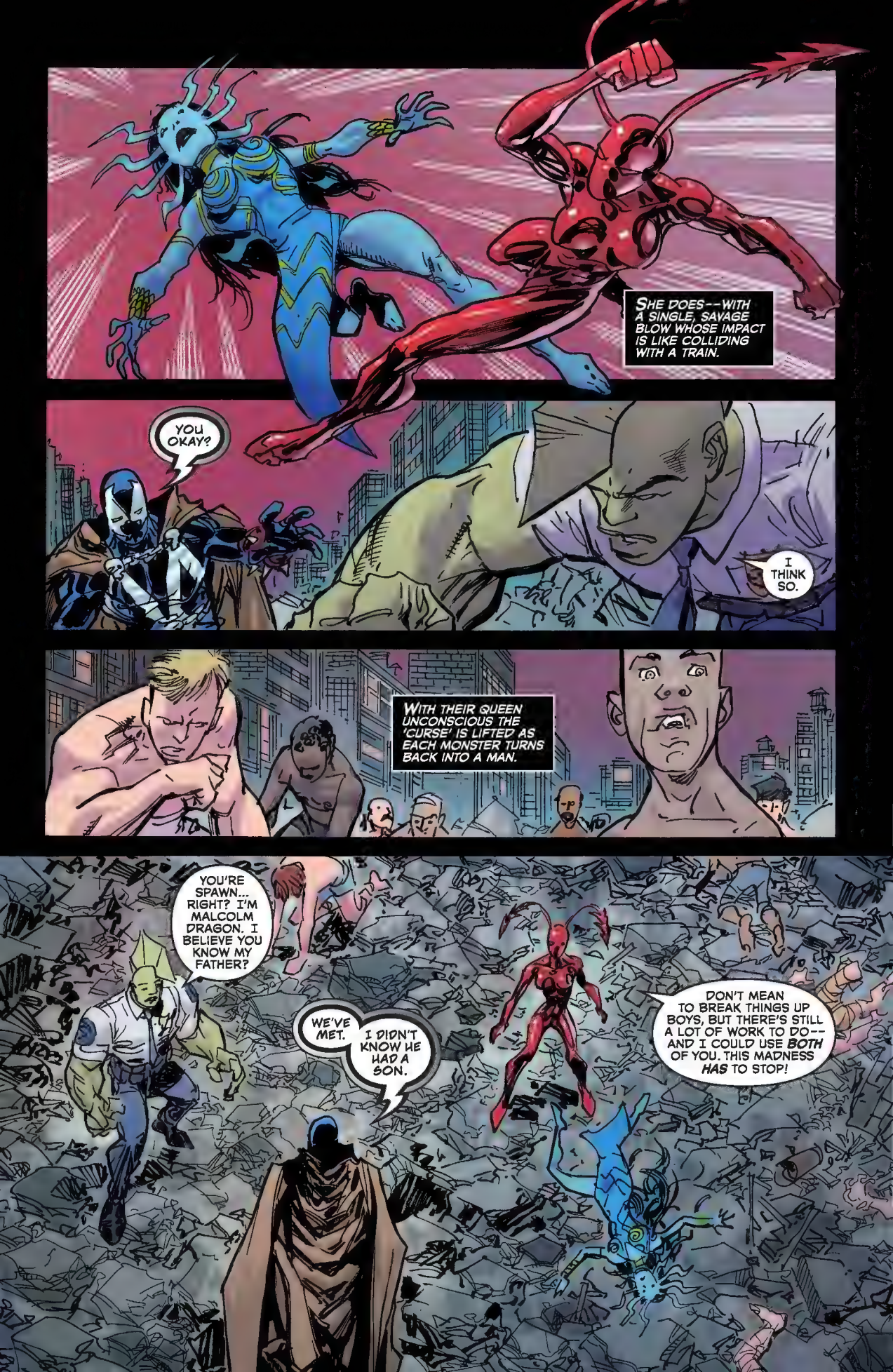
HOW HE HOOKED UP WITH ANT, HE'LL ASK LATER, BECAUSE THOUGH SHE FAILED TO SHOW FOR THEIR MIDNIGHT MEETING, THIS IS THE SECOND TIME SHE HAS COME TO HIS AID.


THEY'RE POWERFUL-- BUT NO MATCH FOR US!
STOP THEM!


FOR A MOMENT, AL HESITATES. NOT OUT OF FEAR BUT BECAUSE HE KNOWS HIS POWERS ARE JUST A SMALL FRACTION THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN. AND HE WANTS TO MAKE SURE HE TAKES THAT INTO ACCOUNT.
HE WAS TRAINED IN THE MILITARY BUT THOSE SKILLS WILL ONLY HELP HIM SO MUCH IN THIS BATTLE. HE'LL ALSO NEED TO USE HIS INTELLIGENCE TO MANEUVER THIS DEATHTRAP.
WATCH YOUR BACK!
HE ALSO DOESN'T WANT TO GIVE ANY SIGNS OF WEAKNESS THAT COULD THROW ANT OR DRAGON FROM THEIR FOCUSED EFFORTS.
I'M GOING IN FOR THE LEADER!

I WON'T RESIST YOU.
AND YOU WON'T RESIST ME.
IT HAPPENS. IN A MATTER OF SECONDS.
A MUTATION TO THE DRAGON THAT DRIVES HIM WILD!
GO, SEEDLING!
SEIZE THE OTHERS! YOUR QUEEN COMMANDS IT!
SPAWN! WE CAN'T DO THIS! NOT WITHOUT DRAGON.
I DON'T NEED THAT KIND OF TALK! WE'RE HERE! AND I'M NOT TURNING BACK!

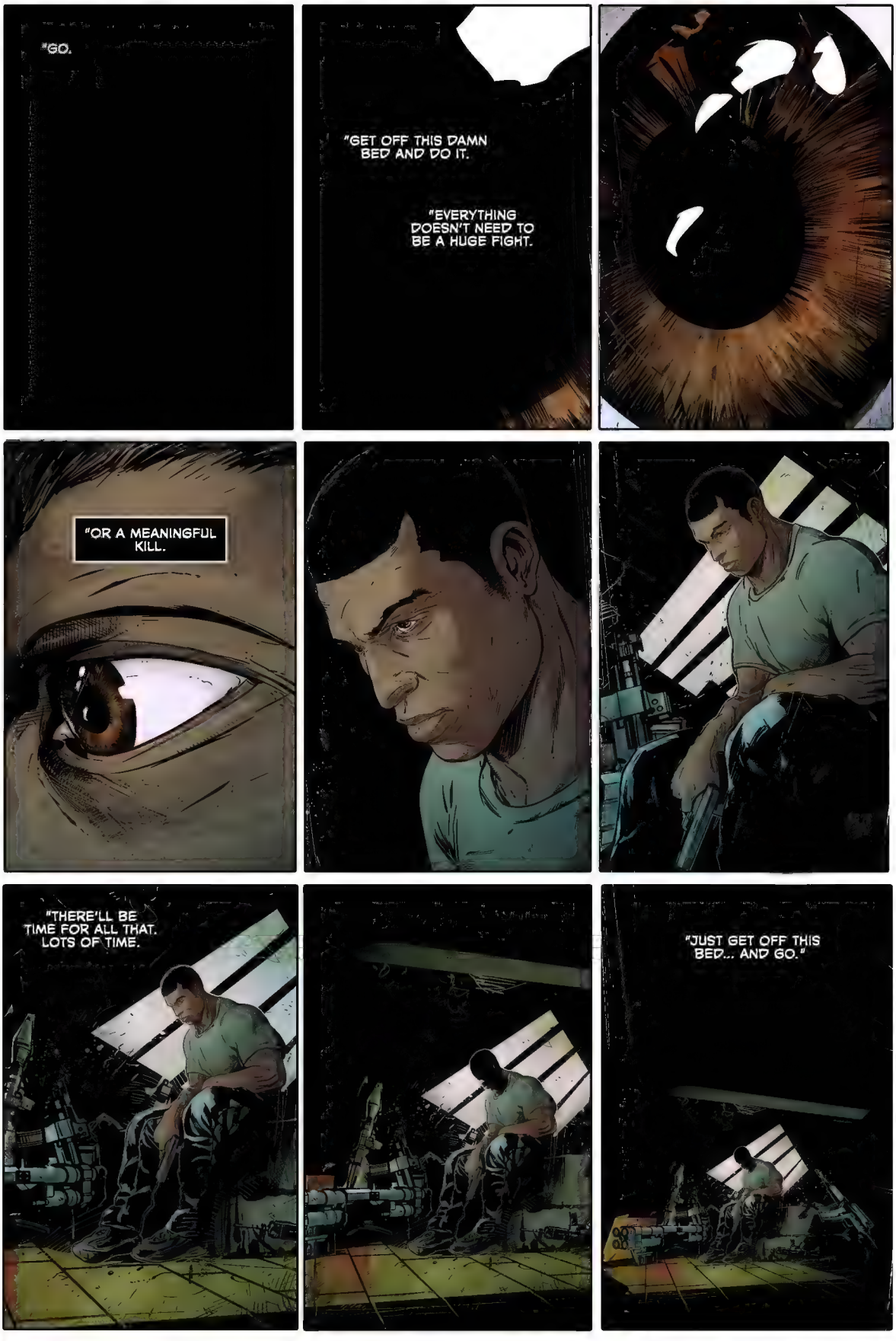
I'VE GOT A PROMISE TO KEEP.
YOU!...
WHY DO I THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE...
...WHO MATTERS...
...IN THIS FIGHT!
STAY BACK!
ANT! MAKE YOUR PLAY! NOW!!
MY CHAINS WON'T HOLD HIM FOR LONG!

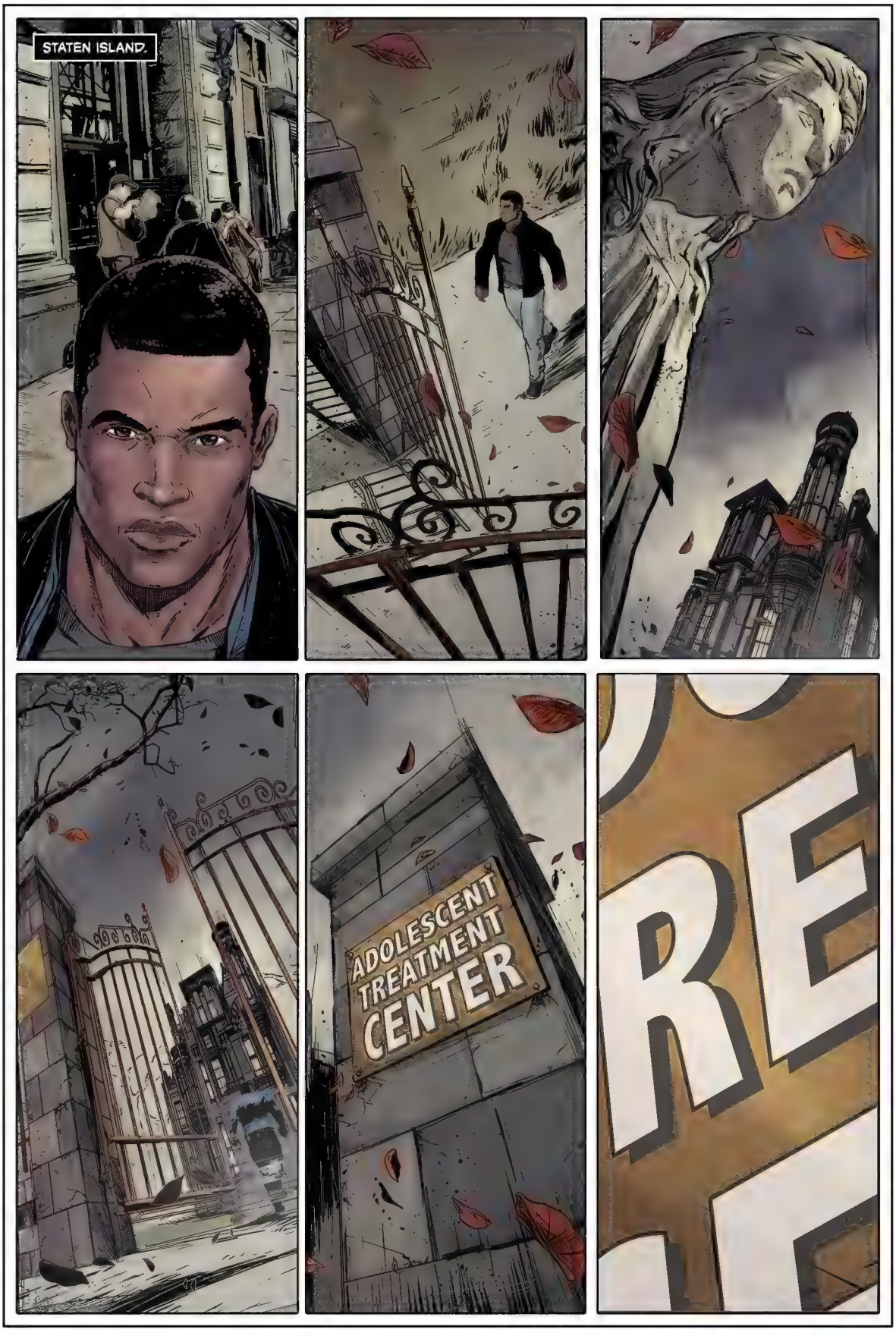

SHE DOES--WITH A SINGLE, SAVAGE BLOW WHOSE IMPACT IS LIKE COLLIDING WITH A TRAIN.
YOU OKAY?
I THINK SO.
WITH THEIR QUEEN UNCONSCIOUS THE 'CURSE' IS LIFTED AS EACH MONSTER TURNS BACK INTO A MAN.
YOU'RE SPAWN... RIGHT? I'M MALCOLM DRAGON. I BELIEVE YOU KNOW MY FATHER?
WE'VE MET.
I DIDN'T KNOW HE HAD A SON.
DON'T MEAN TO BREAK THINGS UP BOYS, BUT THERE'S STILL A LOT OF WORK TO DO--AND I COULD USE BOTH OF YOU. THIS MADNESS HAS TO STOP!

WE UNDERSTAND.
LET ME TALK TO THE POLICE HERE. YOU TWO SEE IF THERE'S ANYONE TRAPPED IN THE RUBBLE IN AREAS CARS CAN'T REACH.
WE'LL HOOK UP LATER.
I'M OFFICER DRAGON. CHICAGO POLICE. I'D LIKE TO HELP IN WHATEVER WAY I CAN.
WE'LL TAKE ALL WE CAN GET. FIRE TRUCKS ARE RIGHT BEHIND US.
LATER.
HOW'S IT LOOK DOWN THERE?
WHAT DO YOU THINK? IT'S SHITTY.
IT WON'T STOP HERE.
THEN LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT! YOU KEEP SAYING YOU KNOW WHO'S BEHIND THIS? THEN LET'S FIND THEM AND TAKE THEM OUT!
MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY! SO...

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE PAGES OF SAVAGE DRAGON #217

SPAWN
image
267


"GO.
"GET OFF THIS DAMN BED AND DO IT.
"EVERYTHING DOESN'T NEED TO BE A HUGE FIGHT.
"OR A MEANINGFUL KILL.
"THERE'LL BE TIME FOR ALL THAT. LOTS OF TIME.
"JUST GET OFF THIS BED... AND GO."

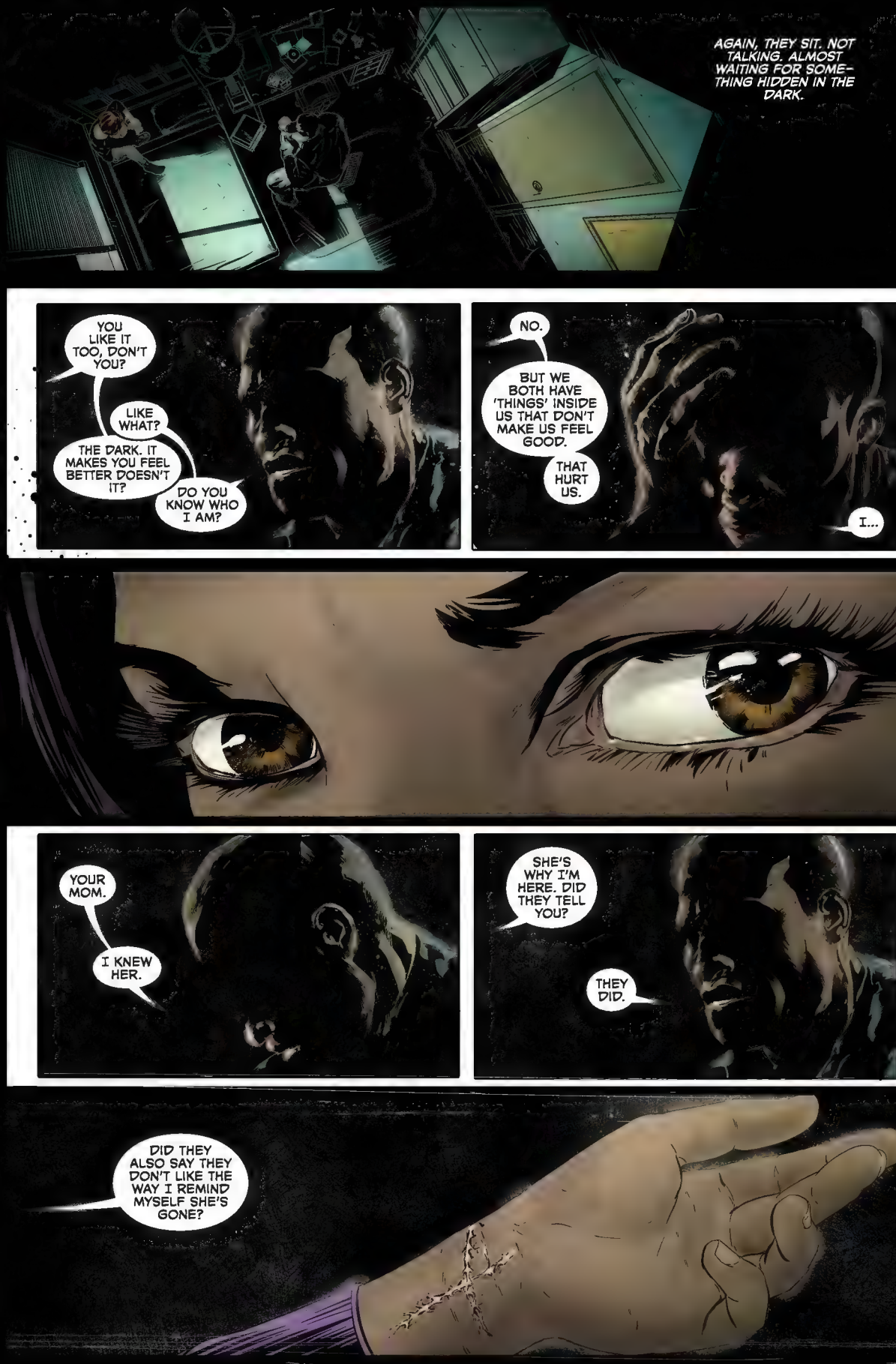

STATEN ISLAND.
ADOLESCENT
TREATMENT
CENTER
RE

YOU UNDERSTAND VISITING HOURS ARE OVER FOR TODAY?
OKAY. BUT THIS WAS THE TIME I WAS TOLD BY HER FATHER TO BE HERE.
WELL, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT. WHAT'S THE PATIENT'S NAME AGAIN?
CYAN FITZGERALD. HER DAD IS NAMED TERRY.
tek tek tek
NO. I'M SORRY. I CAN'T FIND ANY NOTATION ABOUT YOU OR THE PATIENT.
I THINK IT MIGHT BE BETTER IF YOU CAME BACK TOMORROW DURING OUR REGULAR HOURS. I'M SURE WE COULD GET YOU IN THEN.
CYAN. HER NAME IS CYAN.
EXCUSE ME?
THE GIRL YOU KEEP REFERRING TO AS 'THE PATIENT.' SHE HAS A NAME. IT'S CYAN. NOW I WAS TOLD THINGS WOULD BE ARRANGED FOR ME TO SEE HER. I'M SURE TERRY MADE THE PROPER ARRANGEMENTS.
SIR, I UNDERSTAND. BUT MY COMPUTER DOESN'T...
IS YOUR NAME JESSE SMITH?
UM... YES. THAT'S CORRECT.
PLEASE COME WITH ME. DR. BLANCHARD KNOWS ABOUT YOUR VISIT.
I'VE BEEN TOLD CYAN'S FATHER HAS BROUGHT YOU UP TO SPEED ON HER CONDITION.
HE HAS.
I JUST WANT TO WARN YOU THOUGH THAT SHE MAY NOT BE IN THE MOOD FOR TALKING. SO DON'T PUSH HER IF SHE DOESN'T WANT TO ENGAGE. WITH YOU.

HEY, CYAN. GUESS WHAT? YOU HAVE A VISITOR HERE TO SEE YOU. ISN'T THAT GREAT?
CYAN? DID YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?
YOU KNOW, MAYBE I SHOULD JUST COME BACK ANOTHER TIME.
NONSENSE! YOU'LL BE FINE. GUESTS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME. CYAN JUST LIKES BEING A LITTLE SHY.
KoRn

SO, I'M GOING TO LEAVE YOU AND MR. SMITH ALONE FOR A WHILE. LET YOU DO YOUR THING. OKAY, CYAN? YOU GOOD WITH THAT?
EXCELLENT! I'LL BE DOWN THE HALL IF EITHER OF YOU NEED ME.
SHE... DIDN'T SAY IT WAS OKAY.
NO. BUT SHE DIDN'T SAY FOR YOU TO LEAVE EITHER. THAT'S A GOOD SIGN. NOW RELAX AND ENJOY YOURSELVES.

FOR THE NEXT TEN MINUTES AL ASKS A HANDFUL OF RANDOM QUESTIONS. HOPING TO OPEN A CONVERSATION. INSTEAD, EACH OF THEM IS MET WITH NOTHING BUT CHILLING SILENCE.
THEY... TREATING YOU GOOD IN HERE?
AND SO, THE NEXT TWENTY MINUTES, HE RESIGNS HIMSELF TO JUST SIT THERE IN SILENCE TOO.
UH...
I GUESS I'LL BE GOING THEN. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.
TURN OFF THE LIGHTS.
WHAT?
TURN THE LIGHT OFF.
clik


AGAIN, THEY SIT. NOT TALKING. ALMOST WAITING FOR SOMETHING HIDDEN IN THE DARK.
YOU LIKE IT TOO, DON'T YOU?
LIKE WHAT?
THE DARK. IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER DOESN'T IT?
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?
NO.
BUT WE BOTH HAVE 'THINGS' INSIDE US THAT DON'T MAKE US FEEL GOOD.
THAT HURT US.
I...
YOUR MOM.
I KNEW HER.
SHE'S WHY I'M HERE. DID THEY TELL YOU?
THEY DID.
DID THEY ALSO SAY THEY DON'T LIKE THE WAY I REMIND MYSELF SHE'S GONE?

SHE WAS A... GREAT WOMAN.
DID YOU LOVE HER?
YES.
SO DID I.
I'LL GET IT.
PLOP
NO!
DON'T TOUCH IT!

STOP! STOP! STOP IT! STOP!
LIKE SOME SWITCH BEING TRIGGERED, CYAN TURNS INTO A NEAR WILD ANIMAL! SHRIEKS AND GUTTURAL SOUNDS ESCAPE FROM HER THAT NO FOURTEEN YEAR OLD SHOULD EVER UTTER.
AND THE INTENSITY OF HER SAVAGERY SHOCKS AL AS HE INSTINCTUALLY TRIES TO MAKE THINGS BETTER.
IT'S OKAY! CYAN, PLEASE! EVERYTHING'S OKAY!
NOOOOOOOO
WHAT'RE YOU DOING!? LEAVE HER ALONE! YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO TOUCH HER. JUST BACK AWAY!
LINDA! GRAB THE TRAY-- I NEED HELP!

GRAB HER!
HOLD HER DOWN!
THE STRUGGLE REMINDS AL OF THOSE GUYS THAT WRESTLE ALLIGATORS OUT IN THE WILD! THRASHING AND TWISTING SO FAST IT'S HARD TO TELL WHO'S GETTING THE UPPER HAND.
FINALLY, THEY'RE ABLE TO STABILIZE ONE ARM TO SEDATE HER. AND ALL AL CAN THINK OF IS WHAT IN GOD'S NAME IS CAPABLE OF TURNING A CHILD INTO...
...A MONSTER.

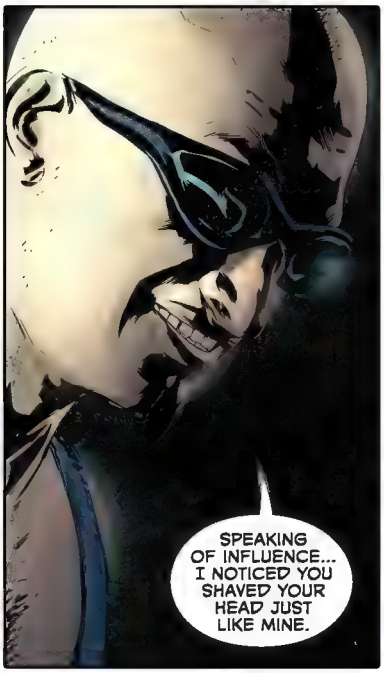
OUTSIDE THE TREATMENT CENTER.
GOD DAMN TRAFFIC! I COULD HAVE WALKED HERE FASTER! NOW TELL ME, WHAT'S GOING ON?
I DON'T KNOW, TERRY. BUT I'M SORRY IF I DID ANYTHING WRONG.
WAIT HERE.

THIRTY MINUTES LATER.
WHAT DID YOU SAY TO HER? THAT SET HER OFF?!
NOTHING.
I WAS TALKING THEN SHE JUST--SHE JUST STARTED FREAKING OUT.
THE NURSES SAID YOU WERE GRABBING HER WHEN THEY CAME IN THE ROOM. WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?
I WASN'T GRABBING HER. I WAS TRYING TO CALM HER DOWN. THAT'S ALL.
YOU'RE SURE?
I'M SURE.
WELL, I DON'T BELIEVE YOU!
I KNEW THIS WAS A BAD IDEA ASKING YOU TO COME HERE...
TERRY, I UNDERSTAND YOU'RE UPSET. BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU DID ASK ME TO COME TALK TO CYAN. SO I CAME. I DID MY PART.
YOU DID YOUR PART!?
YOU TRAUMATIZED HER JUST WHEN SHE WAS GETTING BETTER!

I'M GOING TO GO NOW. WE'LL TALK ABOUT THIS LATER.
DON'T TURN YOUR BACK ON ME! NOT AFTER WHAT YOU JUST DID!
I ASKED YOU TO COME SO YOU COULD HELP HER. NOT SEND HER INTO ANOTHER FIT! YOU ALREADY TOOK HER MOTHER AWAY FROM HER!
SO THIS IS ON YOU!
TOUCH ME AGAIN... AND I'LL BREAK YOUR ARM!
NOW YOU LISTEN! YOUR DAUGHTER'S A DRUG ADDICT. THAT'S HER PROBLEM. SO, I'LL HELP...
BY GETTING RID OF THE POISON PEOPLE ARE SELLING HER. SO I WANT A NAME. SOMEONE THAT MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN WHATEVER SHIT THEY WERE SELLING CYAN.
THAT WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING!

GET ME A NAME!
OKAY!
Okay!
I'LL MAKE A CALL.
ONE NAME. THAT'S ALL I NEED.
PHONE: HELLO, THIS IS AGENT SHERMAN.
LARRY... IT'S TERRY. I NEED YOU TO DO ME A HUGE FAVOR.
I'LL DO MY BEST. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
A FEW MINUTES OF INTENSE CONVERSATION LATER, TERRY GET WHAT HE NEEDS.
THANKS. I OWE YOU.
SO..?
MIGUEL SABATINI. THAT'S THE NAME. HE SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING.

AND YOU KNOW WHAT THAT DOUCHE-BAG DID AFTER THAT? HE WENT TO MCDONALD'S AND STUFFED HIMSELF FULL OF FRIES.
LIKE NOTHING EVER HAPPENED.
YOU IMAGINE THAT?
THAT'S WHY HE'LL NEVER GET ANYWHERE. THE GUY'S GOT NO SENSE OF HOW THE REAL WORLD WORKS.
WE'VE BOTH KNOWN THAT FOR A WHILE, BOSS.
THOUGH HIS KID BROTHER, TOMMY. HE'S OKAY. I DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH HIM. HE JUST NEEDS TO GET AWAY FROM THAT DAMN FAMILY OF HIS. THEY GOT TOO MUCH INFLUENCE OVER HIM.


SPEAKING OF INFLUENCE... I NOTICED YOU SHAVED YOUR HEAD JUST LIKE MINE.

C'MON, BOSS. I TOLD YOU I WAS GOING TO DO THAT BEFORE YOU GOT YOURS DONE. STOP BUSTING MY BALLS.

BLAM
ting!

THE BODYGUARD SWINGS TO GRAB HIS WEAPON. HE'S A FRACTION TOO LATE.
BLAM
BLAM
ANOTHER GUARD RUSHES THE DOOR.
AGAIN, A FRACTION TOO LATE.
SMASH
I'M LOOKING FOR, MIGUEL.
I DON'T...
PWAP
WRONG ANSWER.

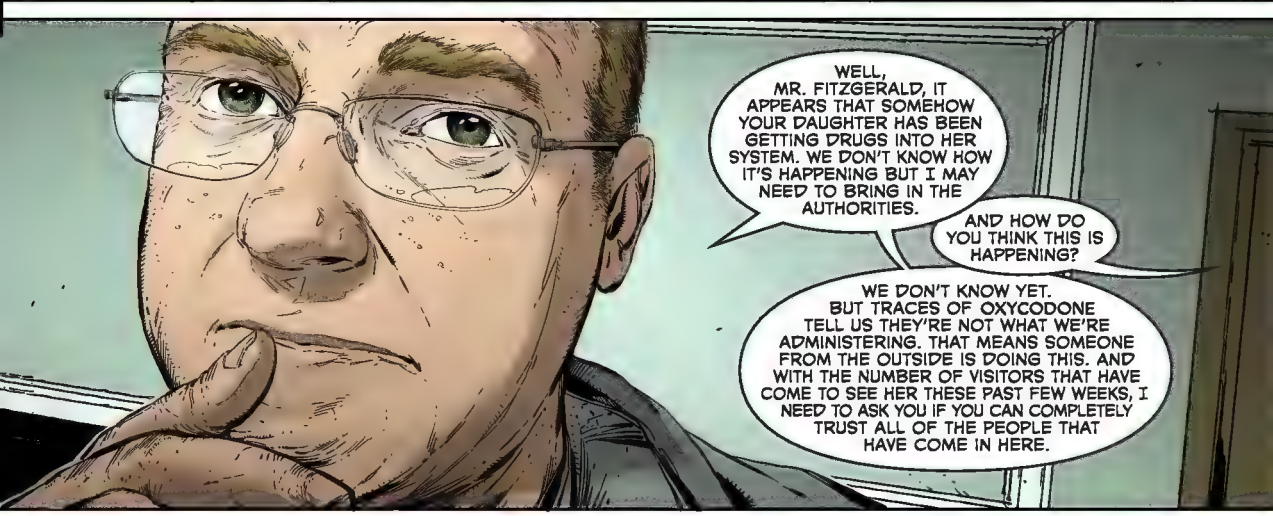
YOU'RE NEXT. MIGUEL? WHERE IS HE?
F*CK YOU!
POP
TO MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T GET ANY SURPRISES FROM THE TWO GUARDS, HE PUTS A BULLET INTO EACH OF THEIR KNEECAPS THEN BLOCKS OUT THEIR SCREAMS OF PAIN.
NEITHER OF THEM WILL WALK 'NORMAL' AGAIN.

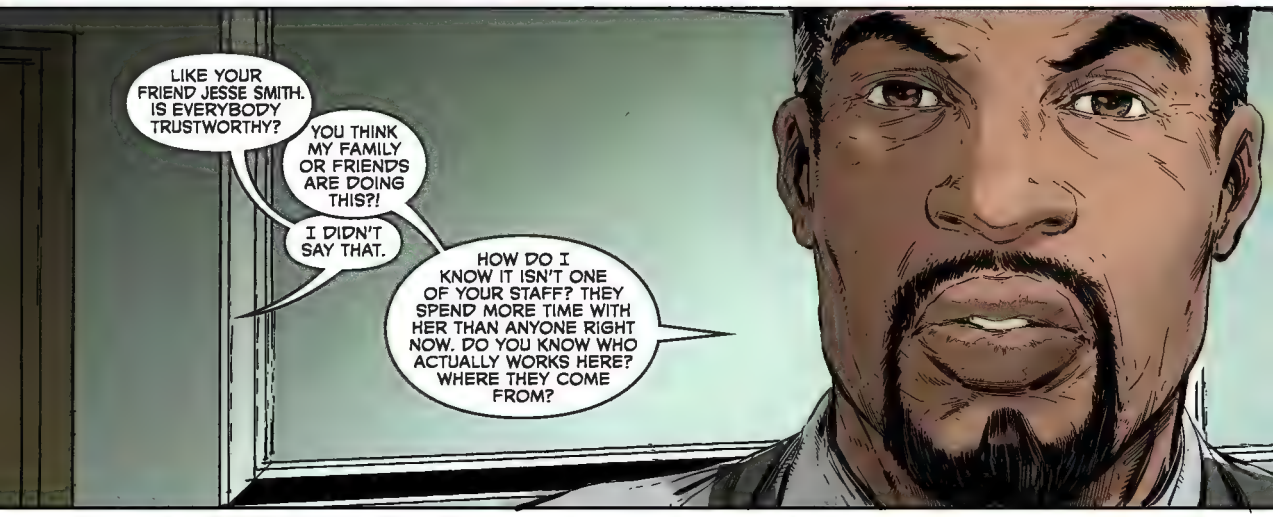
NICE DESK YOU HAVE.
SLICE
THAT MUST MAKE YOU THE BOSS.
YOUR NAME MIGUEL?
WHO'S ASKING?
EVERY CHILD YOU'VE EVER POISONED.
YOU THINK YOU'RE TOUGH IN THAT TWO-BIT COSTUME?
I'LL TAKE THIS...

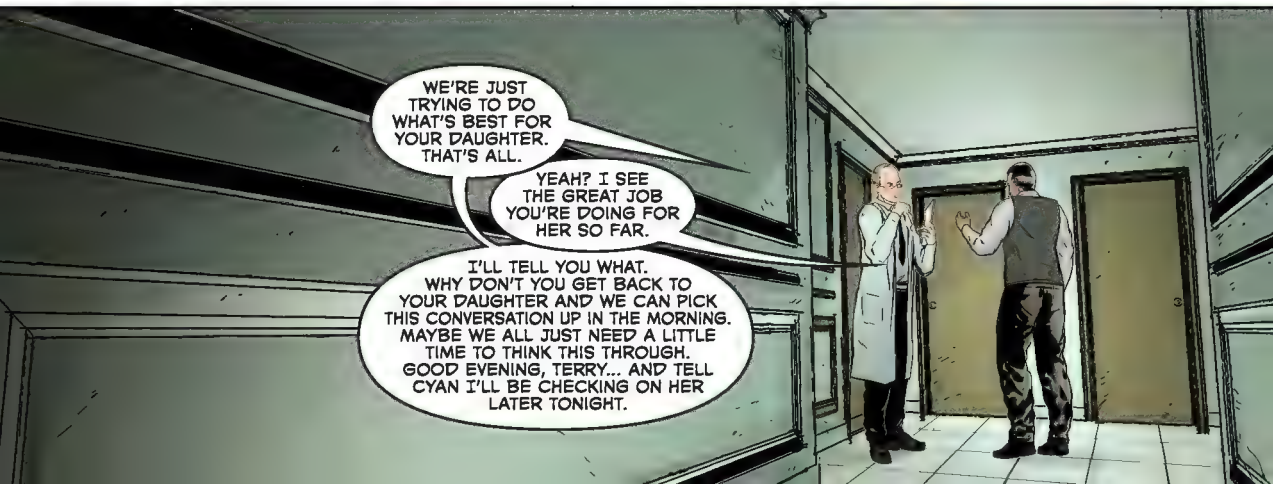
I ASSUME IT'LL HAVE YOUR SUPPLIER'S CONTACTS IN IT.
SCREW THE KIDS.
WHAT'D YOU SAY?
VIP
VIP
VIP
BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM
HE HOLDS THE DEAD BODY OF MIGUEL SABATINI. IT WASN'T HIS INTENT TO KILL ANYONE TONIGHT, BECAUSE AL KNOWS THEY ARE JUST HIRED HELP. THEY WIELD NO REAL POWER OTHER THAN THE DRUGS THEY PEDDLE.
BUT THE PEOPLE HE WORKED FOR, THEY'RE THE ONES WITH THE SOPHISTICATION. THE ONES WHO HAVE SET UP OPERATIONS THAT SPAN NOT ONLY IN THIS STATE, BUT PROBABLY ACROSS THE NATION AND EVEN ABROAD.
THEY'RE THE ONES THAT NEED TO DIE, NOT THESE LOWLIFE LOSERS WHO JUST FALL IN LINE TRYING TO ACT LIKE THEY'RE IMPORTANT SOMEHOW. THEY AREN'T. THEY NEVER HAVE BEEN.
AND NOW THEY NEVER WILL BE.

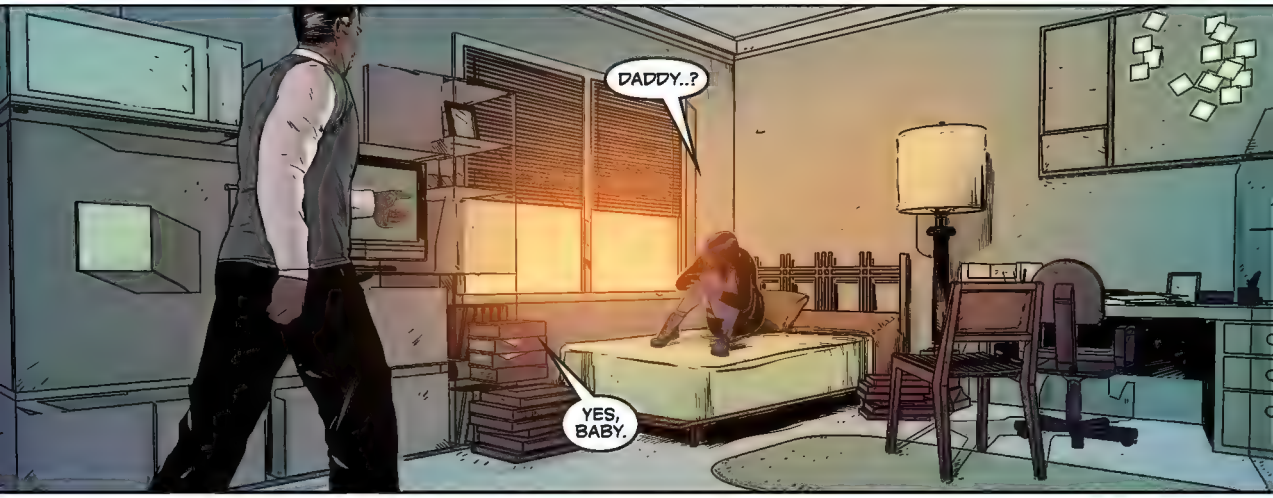
EARLIER. AWAY FROM AL'S HEARING.
HELLO, THIS IS AGENT SHERMAN.
LARRY... IT'S TERRY. I NEED YOU TO DO ME A HUGE FAVOR.
I'LL DO MY BEST. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
I NEED A NAME FROM YOUR CARTEL 22 FILES. A LOW LEVEL GUY. NOTHING BIG.
YOU KNOW I CAN'T DO THAT. IT'S AGAINST POLICY.
YES YOU CAN. JUST LIKE YOU DID ON THE PEREZ CASE.
THAT WAS DIFFERENT.
I GUESS THOSE WHORES YOU WERE WITH CLOUDED YOUR ETHICS. BE A SHAME IF SOMEONE FOUND OUT ABOUT THAT. SO... I JUST NEED THE NAME OF A THROW AWAY.
I JUST TEXTED YOU.
THANKS. I OWE YOU.
YEAH. F*CK YOU TOO.
SO..?
MIGUEL SABATINI. THAT'S THE NAME. HE SHOULD KNOW SOMETHING.

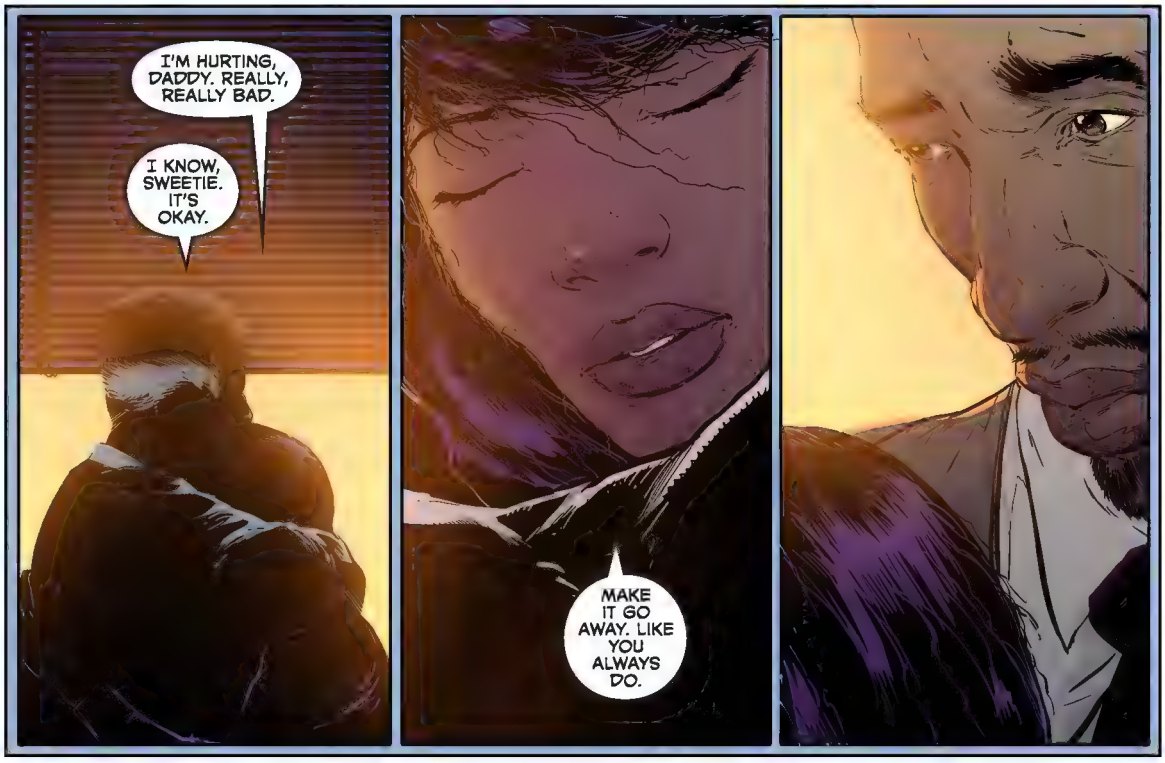
I'VE DONE A REVIEW OF ALL CYAN'S LATEST LAB TESTS WE'VE RECENTLY RUN, AND I NEED TO TELL YOU THERE SEEMS TO BE A PORTION OF IT THAT HAS ME FAIRLY CONCERNED.
AS YOU KNOW, WE'VE BEEN DOING OUR BEST TO GIVE CYAN ALL THE SUPPORT AND HELP SHE NEEDS. AND SO FAR MOST OF HER BEHAVIOR HAS BEEN FAIRLY COMMON. BUT HER LAST FEW OUTBURSTS, WELL... I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE GOING ON.
YOU MEAN MENTALLY?
PERHAPS. BUT THAT IS USUALLY A BYPRODUCT OF WHATEVER CHEMICAL IMBALANCE IS HAPPENING IN THE PATIENT'S BODY. AND THAT'S MY PROBLEM.
I'M NOT FOLLOWING.

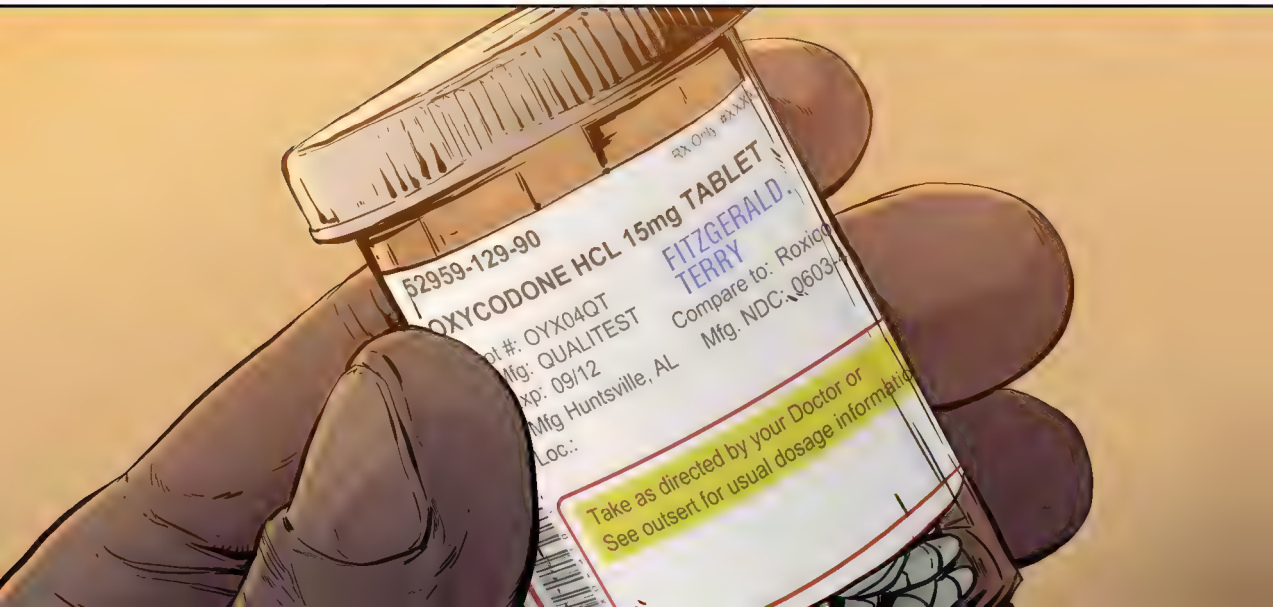

WELL, MR. FITZGERALD, IT APPEARS THAT SOMEHOW YOUR DAUGHTER HAS BEEN GETTING DRUGS INTO HER SYSTEM. WE DON'T KNOW HOW IT'S HAPPENING BUT I MAY NEED TO BRING IN THE AUTHORITIES.
AND HOW DO YOU THINK THIS IS HAPPENING?
WE DON'T KNOW YET. BUT TRACES OF OXYCODONE TELL US THEY'RE NOT WHAT WE'RE ADMINISTERING. THAT MEANS SOMEONE FROM THE OUTSIDE IS DOING THIS. AND WITH THE NUMBER OF VISITORS THAT HAVE COME TO SEE HER THESE PAST FEW WEEKS, I NEED TO ASK YOU IF YOU CAN COMPLETELY TRUST ALL OF THE PEOPLE THAT HAVE COME IN HERE.


LIKE YOUR FRIEND JESSE SMITH. IS EVERYBODY TRUSTWORTHY?
YOU THINK MY FAMILY OR FRIENDS ARE DOING THIS?!
I DIDN'T SAY THAT.
HOW DO I KNOW IT ISN'T ONE OF YOUR STAFF? THEY SPEND MORE TIME WITH HER THAN ANYONE RIGHT NOW. DO YOU KNOW WHO ACTUALLY WORKS HERE? WHERE THEY COME FROM?


WE'RE JUST TRYING TO DO WHAT'S BEST FOR YOUR DAUGHTER. THAT'S ALL.
YEAH? I SEE THE GREAT JOB YOU'RE DOING FOR HER SO FAR.
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT. WHY DON'T YOU GET BACK TO YOUR DAUGHTER AND WE CAN PICK THIS CONVERSATION UP IN THE MORNING. MAYBE WE ALL JUST NEED A LITTLE TIME TO THINK THIS THROUGH. GOOD EVENING, TERRY... AND TELL CYAN I'LL BE CHECKING ON HER LATER TONIGHT.


DADDY..?
YES, BABY.


I'M HURTING, DADDY. REALLY, REALLY BAD.
I KNOW, SWEETIE. IT'S OKAY.
MAKE IT GO AWAY. LIKE YOU ALWAYS DO.


52959-129-90
OXYCODONE HCL 15mg TABLET
FITZGERALD, TERRY
Take as directed by your Doctor or
See outsert for usual dosage

SPAWN
image
268

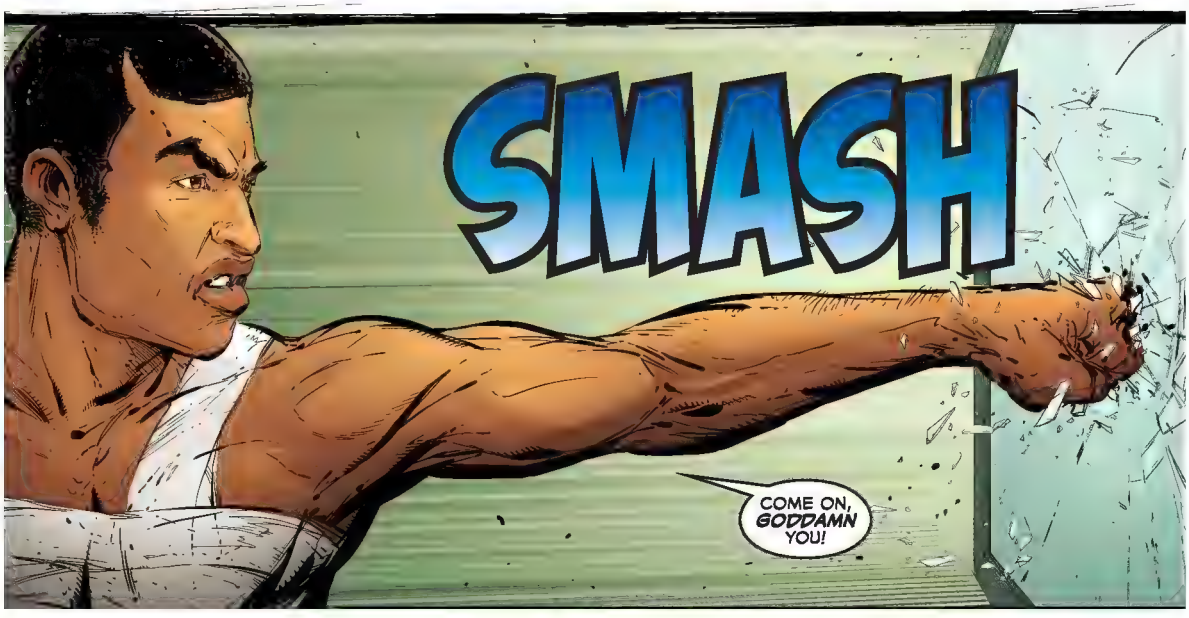
"I PROMISED MYSELF I WOULDN'T LET EMOTIONS GUIDE MY ACTIONS. THAT I'D STICK TO MY 'PLAN'. DO WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE.
"BUT I CAN'T LET THIS ONE GO. NOT THIS ONE.
"THEY'VE MADE IT PERSONAL."
THURSDAY. 1:47 A.M.
BROOKLYN.

FRIDAY. 2:12 A.M.
STATEN ISLAND.

SATURDAY. JUST BEFORE DAWN.
QUEENS.

SUNDAY. 11:57 P.M.
THE BRONX.
"I CAN'T KEEP DOING THIS.
NOT BY MYSELF. NOT ALONE.
"I WON'T SURVIVE."

MONDAY MORNING.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO? DIE? IS THAT WHAT YOU WANT?
THEY KILL ME--THEY KILL YOU! DON'T YOU GET THAT?
WE NEED EACH OTHER.
SO, HELP ME! LIKE I NEED YOU TO!


SMASH
COME ON, GODDAMN YOU!

GROWL!
HIS ANGER IS MIXED WITH FRUSTRATION AND CONFUSION. HIS COSTUME KEEPS APPEARING WHEN HE GOES INTO BATTLE, SO IT SENSES 'SOMETHING'. AND HIS CHAINS HAVE TAKEN ON SOME NEW POWER THAT LEVITATES HIM.
BUT OTHER THAN COVERING HIS BODY, THE SYMBIOTE IS OFFERING LITTLE PROTECTION. WHAT WAS ONCE A FLEXIBLE BLACK ARMOR HAS NOW BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN A THIN FAÇADE.

AND IT'S BARELY TOUGHER THAN AL'S OWN HUMAN SKIN.
WHICH MEANS AL NEEDS TO FIND HIS HELP ELSEWHERE...

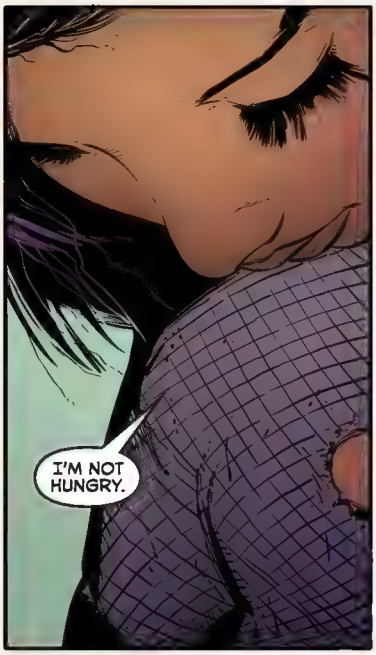
SOUTPAWS
GYM
HEY, BENNY. I'M LOOKING FOR EARL. SEEN HIM LATELY?
NOT FOR A FEW DAYS.
PROBABLY AT HOME DOING THINGS.
YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW WHERE THAT IS?
SURE...
"...BUT IT AIN'T THE TAJ MAHAL."

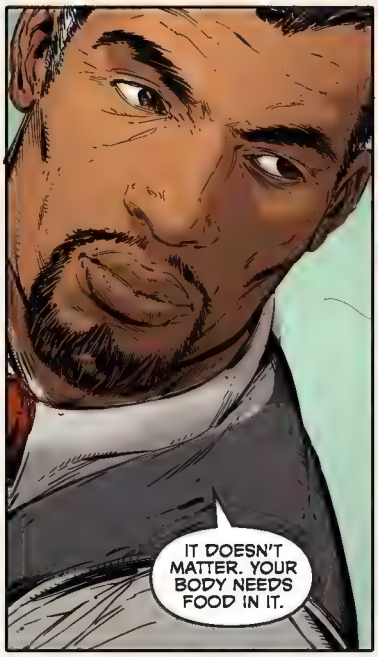
AL? THOUGHT THAT WAS YOU WALKING UP. WHAT'RE YOU DOING IN THESE PARTS?
SURE. SURE. C'MON IN.
NEEDED TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT SOME-THING.
THIS HERE IS MY MOM. NOT AS SPRY AS SHE USE TO BE BUT WE MANAGE.
MOM, THIS HERE IS AL. ONE OF THE FELLOWS FROM THE GYM.
NO, HE'S FROM THE GYM. HIS NAME IS AL.
NICE TO MEET YOU, JIM.
PLEASURE TO MEET YOU MA'AM. DIDN'T MEAN TO INTERRUPT YOUR DAY.
WE'LL BE OUTSIDE IN THE BACK IF YOU NEED ANY-THING, OKAY?
I'M FINE.
SO... WHAT'S UP?
YOU NEED WORK, EARL?
SURE. WHAT KIND?
THE KIND THAT PAYS. YOU HAVE A CAR?
I NEED YOU TO PICK SOMETHING UP THEN MEET ME TONIGHT AT MID-NIGHT. HERE'S THE ADDRESS.
A VAN.
IS THIS LEGAL?
MIDNIGHT. CAN YOU BE THERE?

ADOLESCENT
TREATMENT
CENTER

TERRY AND HIS DAUGHTER, CYAN, HAVE BEEN SITTING MOSTLY SILENT SINCE HE CAME TO VISIT HER. IT'S A ROUTINE THEY'VE GONE THROUGH BEFORE.

THE NURSES SAY YOU HAVEN'T BEEN EATING PROPERLY. YOU NEED TO KEEP YOUR STRENGTH UP, YOU KNOW.


I'M NOT HUNGRY.


IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOUR BODY NEEDS FOOD IN IT.

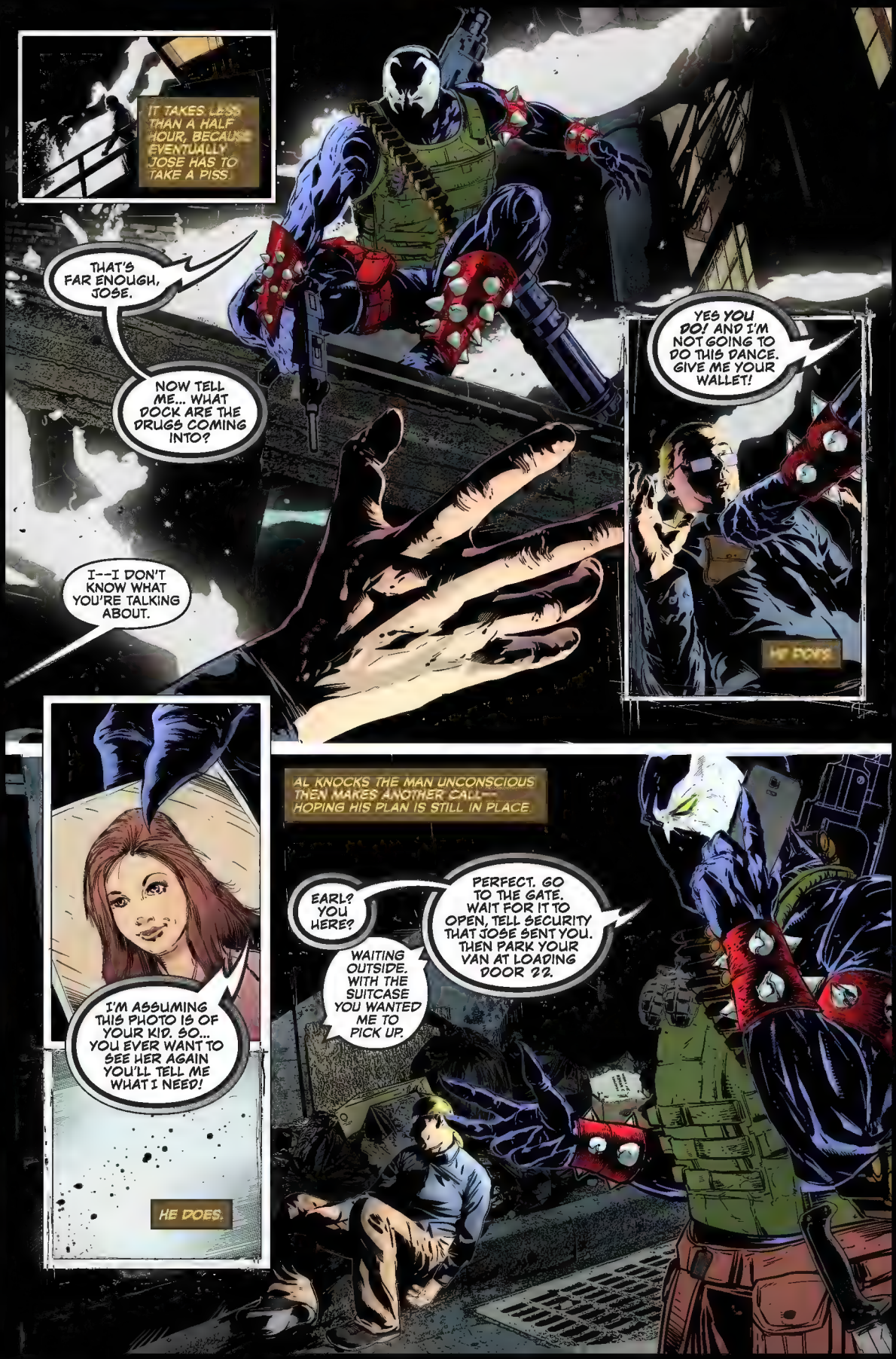
WHY CAN'T I HAVE MY CELL PHONE?

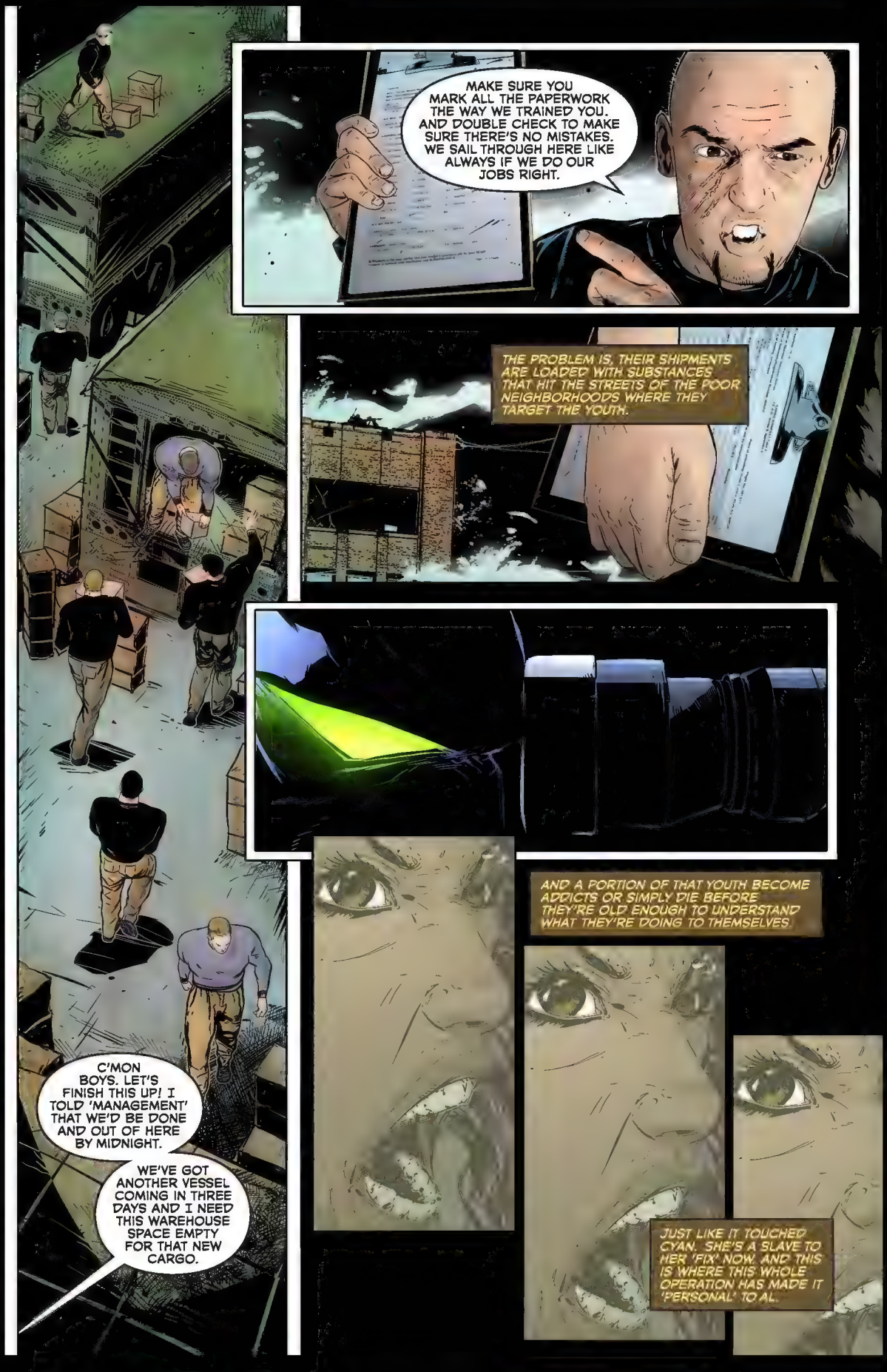
WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT YOUR PHONE. WE'RE TALKING ABOUT EATING. HERE, JUST TRY A FEW BITES.

I SAID I'M NOT HUNGRY!
HE KNOWS IT'S NOT WORTH FIGHTING ABOUT-- NOT NOW AT LEAST. HE ALSO KNOWS HE'S PART OF HER PROBLEM. PROVIDING HER WITH PAINKILLERS WHEN CYAN WAS COPING WITH HER MOTHER'S DEATH. BUT THAT WAS NEARLY A YEAR AGO.*
*AFTER SAVING WANDA'S SOUL, A YEAR HAD PASSED WHEN AL RETURNED FROM HELL--TODD
TERRY'S SEEN VERY LITTLE PROGRESS SINCE ADMITTING HER TO THIS INSTITUTION TWO MONTHS AGO. IN FACT SHE SEEMS TO ONLY HAVE GOTTEN WORSE. RARELY DOES SHE INTERACT WITH OTHERS AND IS PRONE TO RANDOM EPISODES OF VIOLENT OUTBURSTS.
HE'S AT A LOSS AS TO WHAT TO DO NEXT.
I'LL LEAVE YOU ALONE. I'LL SEE YOU IN A FEW DAYS.
DAD...
IF YOU SEE AL AGAIN, TELL HIM I HAVE AN ANSWER TO HIS LAST QUESTION.
WHAT'S THE QUESTION?
JUST TELL HIM. HE'LL KNOW.
AND DAD...
YEAH?
TURN OFF THE LIGHT WHEN YOU LEAVE...
"I LIKE IT WHEN IT'S DARK."
clik

10:47 P.M.
THIS IS THE PLACE--WHERE ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE MIXED AND TRANSFERRED WITH LEGITIMATE PRODUCTS BEING SHIPPED FROM OVERSEAS. WITH SUCH MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS PASSING THROUGH EVERYDAY, IT'S BEEN A PERFECT FRONT FOR YEARS.
NINETY-EIGHT PERCENT OF WHAT COMES HERE IS LEGAL. AL JUST NEEDS TO FIND OUT WHICH OF THE DOZENS OF TOWERS IS HIS TARGET.
HE HOPES ONE OF THE PHONES HE LIFTED FROM A PREVIOUS BATTLE WILL PROVIDE A CLUE.
Sheffield
216 767 2676

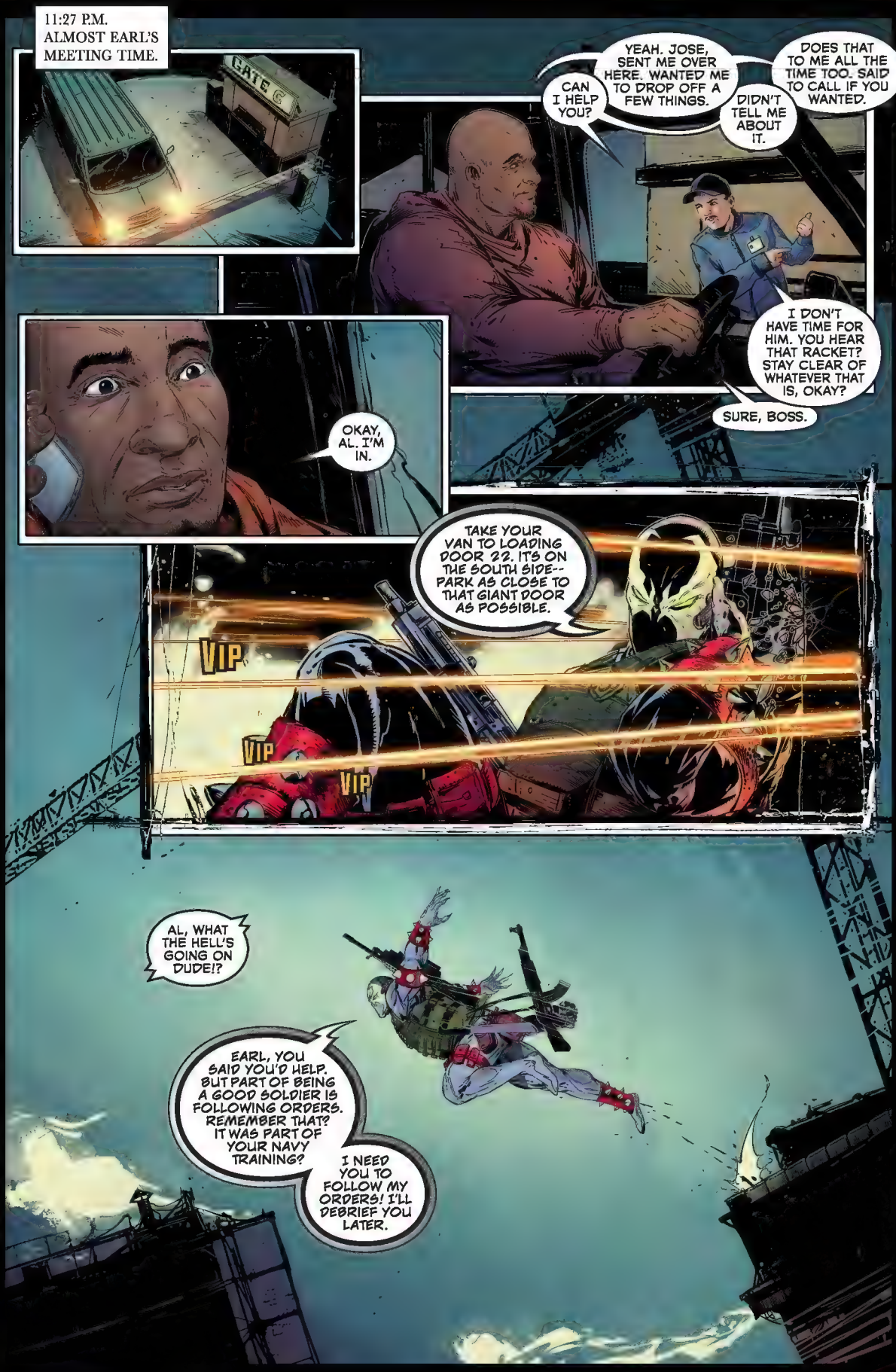
IT'S THE SAME NAME AS THE BILLBOARD NEAR THE TOWERS. HE DIALS IT.
HELLO? THIS IS JOSE.
HELLO...?
GOT HIM! IT'S THE GUY IN TOWER TWELVE.
A LITTLE MORE PATIENCE THEN AL WILL SPRING HIS TRAP.


IT TAKES LESS THAN A HALF HOUR, BECAUSE EVENTUALLY JOSE HAS TO TAKE A PISS.
THAT'S FAR ENOUGH, JOSE.
NOW TELL ME... WHAT DOCK ARE THE DRUGS COMING INTO?
I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YES YOU DO! AND I'M NOT GOING TO DO THIS DANCE. GIVE ME YOUR WALLET!
HE PONS
I'M ASSUMING THIS PHOTO IS OF YOUR KID. SO... YOU EVER WANT TO SEE HER AGAIN YOU'LL TELL ME WHAT I NEED!
HE DOES.
AL KNOCKS THE MAN UNCONSCIOUS THEN MAKES ANOTHER CALL— HOPING HIS PLAN IS STILL IN PLACE
EARL? YOU HERE?
WAITING OUTSIDE. WITH THE SUITCASE YOU WANTED ME TO PICK UP.
PERFECT. GO TO THE GATE. WAIT FOR IT TO OPEN, TELL SECURITY THAT JOSE SENT YOU. THEN PARK YOUR VAN AT LOADING DOOR 22.


MAKE SURE YOU MARK ALL THE PAPERWORK THE WAY WE TRAINED YOU. AND DOUBLE CHECK TO MAKE SURE THERE'S NO MISTAKES. WE SAIL THROUGH HERE LIKE ALWAYS IF WE DO OUR JOBS RIGHT.
THE PROBLEM IS, THEIR SHIPMENTS ARE LOADED WITH SUBSTANCES THAT HIT THE STREETS OF THE POOR NEIGHBORHOODS WHERE THEY TARGET THE YOUTH.
AND A PORTION OF THAT YOUTH BECOME ADDICTS OR SIMPLY DIE BEFORE THEY'RE OLD ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND WHAT THEY'RE DOING TO THEMSELVES.
JUST LIKE IT TOUCHED CYAN. SHE'S A SLAVE TO HER 'FIX' NOW. AND THIS IS WHERE THIS WHOLE OPERATION HAS MADE IT 'PERSONAL' TO AL.
C'MON BOYS. LET'S FINISH THIS UP! I TOLD 'MANAGEMENT' THAT WE'D BE DONE AND OUT OF HERE BY MIDNIGHT.
WE'VE GOT ANOTHER VESSEL COMING IN THREE DAYS AND I NEED THIS WAREHOUSE SPACE EMPTY FOR THAT NEW CARGO.

VIP
VIP
VIP
VIP
VIP
HOLY SHIT!
VERY PERSONAL!
VIP
VIP
VIP
HIS SPRAY OF BULLETS IS MEANT TO DISTRACT. TO GET AS MANY OF THESE SCUMBAGS TO COME TO THE NORTH SIDE OF THE WAREHOUSE.
VIP
AND THE MORE OF THEM ON THE NORTH SIDE, THE EASIER IT'LL BE FOR AL TO GET SOMEONE THROUGH ON THE SOUTH SIDE.

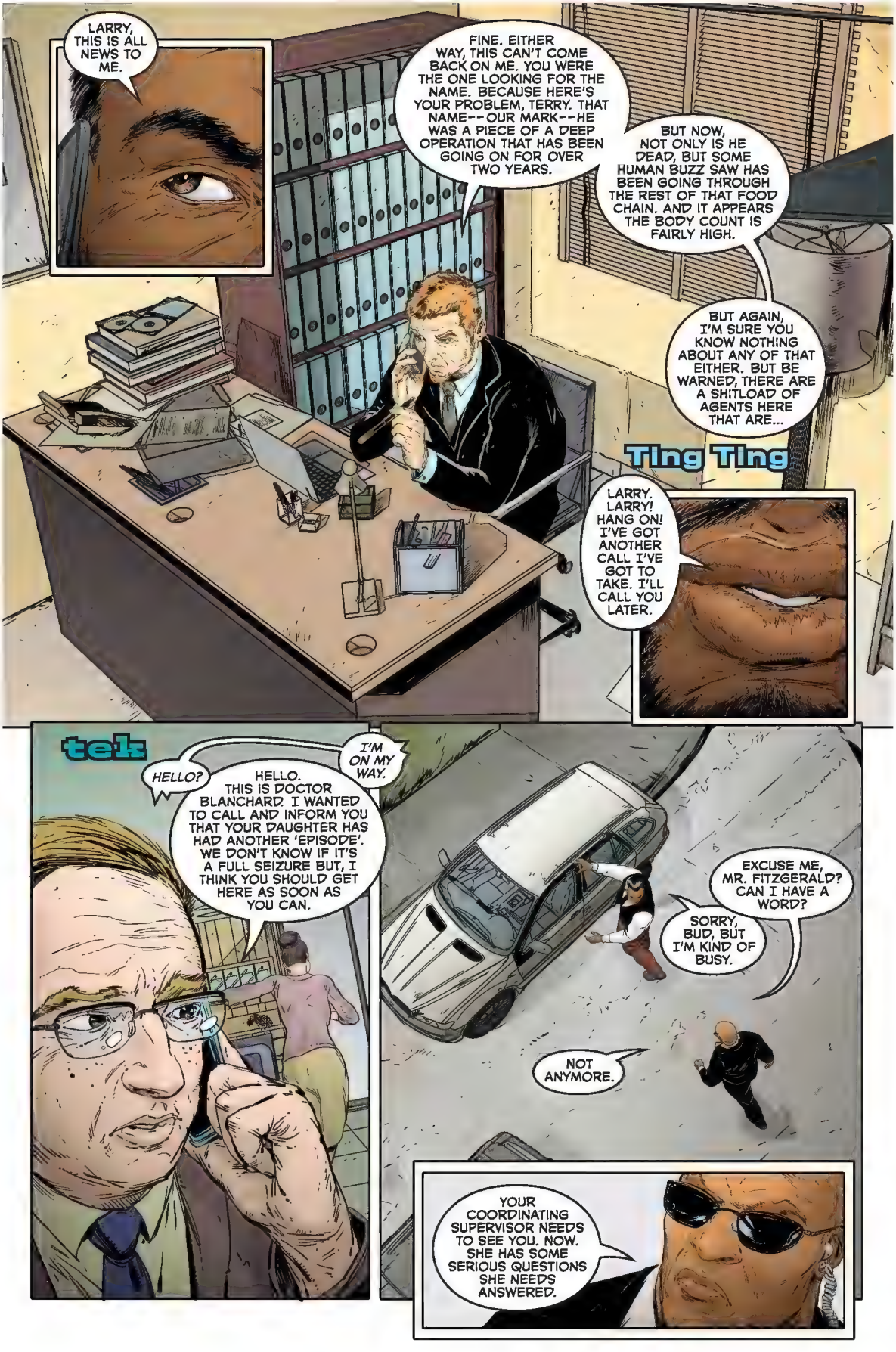
"JESUS CHRIST!
"CALL THE OTHER BOYS! TELL 'EM WE'RE UNDER ATTACK!
"GET THEIR ASSES HERE NOW!"
IT'S COMING FROM THE ROOF! BILLY! GARY! GRAB YOUR HEAVY STUFF AND BLAST WHOEVER'S UP THERE.
THE PLACE TURNS INTO A WAR ZONE AS AL MOVES FROM POSITION TO POSITION TO CREATE THE ILLUSION THERE'S MORE THAN ONE ATTACKER.
AND MORE IMPORTANTLY TO KEEP THEM FLOWING TOWARDS THE NORTH!


11:27 P.M.
ALMOST EARL'S MEETING TIME.
GATE G
CAN I HELP YOU?
YEAH. JOSE, SENT ME OVER HERE. WANTED ME TO DROP OFF A FEW THINGS.
DIDN'T TELL ME ABOUT IT.
DOES THAT TO ME ALL THE TIME TOO. SAID TO CALL IF YOU WANTED.
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR HIM. YOU HEAR THAT RACKET? STAY CLEAR OF WHATEVER THAT IS, OKAY?
SURE, BOSS.
OKAY, AL. I'M IN.
TAKE YOUR VAN TO LOADING DOOR 22. IT'S ON THE SOUTH SIDE-- PARK AS CLOSE TO THAT GIANT DOOR AS POSSIBLE.
VIP
VIP
VIP
AL, WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON DUDE!?
EARL, YOU SAID YOU'D HELP. BUT PART OF BEING A GOOD SOLDIER IS FOLLOWING ORDERS. REMEMBER THAT? IT WAS PART OF YOUR NAVY TRAINING?
I NEED YOU TO FOLLOW MY ORDERS! I'LL DEBRIEF YOU LATER.

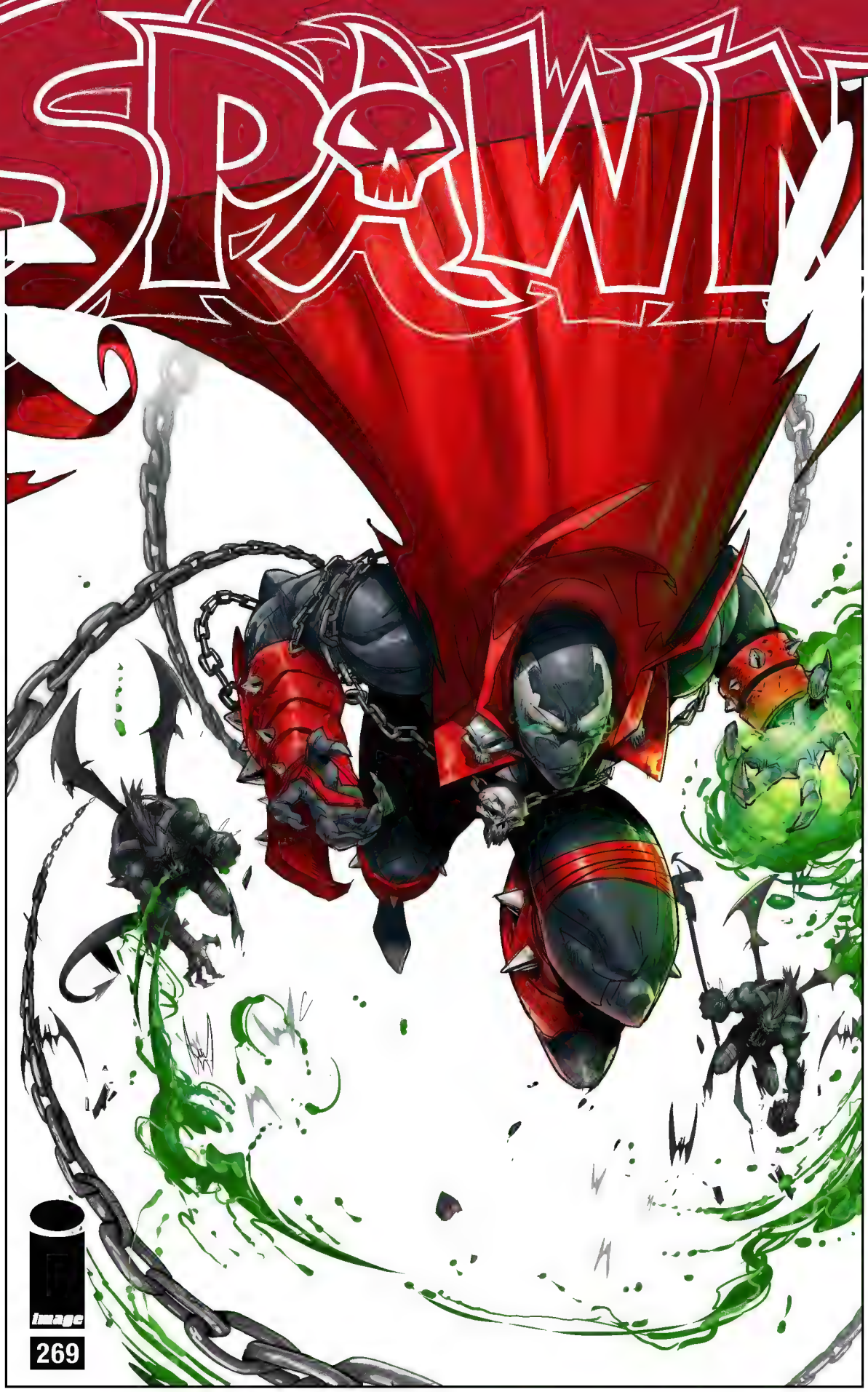
ALRIGHT! I'M HERE. NOW WHAT?
22
GET OUT OF YOUR VAN.
WHAT?
21
22
GET OUT OF YOUR VAN, LEAVE THE SUITCASE AND WALK AWAY.
AND IF I WERE YOU I WOULDN'T DELAY.
creeekk
AL... I'VE GOT COMPANY. HOLDING SOME SERIOUS HARDWARE.

THEN LISTEN CAREFULLY, EARL...
YEAH.
RUN!
AS FAST AS YOU CAN!
BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAK
AL SHOOTS FIRST. HITTING EARL'S VAN WHICH CONTAINS THE SUITCASE HE PICKED UP. INSIDE THAT CASE ARE THIRTY SMALL 'DIRTY BOMBS'.
AND JUST AS HE'D PLANNED, ONE OF AL'S BULLETS HITS THE SUITCASE.

JAKE! KATE! LET'S GET GOING! YOU'RE GOING TO BE LATE.
DO YOU HAVE YOUR LUNCHES?
IT'S IN MY BACK-PACK.
MINE TOO.
DAD? WHEN'S CYAN COMING HOME? YOU SAID SHE WOULD!
I KNOW. PRETTY SOON I HOPE.
CAN WE MAKE HER A CARD WHEN SHE DOES?
I THINK SHE'D LIKE THAT.
NOW REMEMBER, YOU'RE BOTH GOING OVER TO JIMMY'S HOUSE AFTER SCHOOL. HIS MOM IS GOING TO BE PICKING YOU UP.
I HATE JIMMY!
KATE... THEN STAY AWAY FROM HIM. PLAY WITH THEIR DOG OR DO A DRAWING OR SOMETHING. I'LL COME GET YOU AFTER WORK AND MAYBE WE CAN GO OUT FOR DINNER!
HAVE A GOOD DAY!
BYE, DAD.
beep beep beep
HELLO?
WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON, FITZGERALD!? ARE YOU TRYING TO F*CK WITH ME? IS THAT IT?
WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? JUST CALM DOWN AND TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT.
YOU KNOW DAMN WELL WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT! THAT NAME I GAVE YOU WEDNES-DAY...*
YEAH.
HE'S DEAD! JUST GOT CONFIRMATION TEN MINUTES AGO. SO, I GIVE YOU A NAME AND NOW HE'S DEAD. TELL ME YOUR HANDS ARE CLEAN WITH THIS!
*See last issue --Todd


LARRY, THIS IS ALL NEWS TO ME.
FINE. EITHER WAY, THIS CAN'T COME BACK ON ME. YOU WERE THE ONE LOOKING FOR THE NAME. BECAUSE HERE'S YOUR PROBLEM, TERRY. THAT NAME--OUR MARK--HE WAS A PIECE OF A DEEP OPERATION THAT HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR OVER TWO YEARS.
BUT NOW, NOT ONLY IS HE DEAD, BUT SOME HUMAN BUZZ SAW HAS BEEN GOING THROUGH THE REST OF THAT FOOD CHAIN. AND IT APPEARS THE BODY COUNT IS FAIRLY HIGH.
BUT AGAIN, I'M SURE YOU KNOW NOTHING ABOUT ANY OF THAT EITHER. BUT BE WARNED, THERE ARE A SHITLOAD OF AGENTS HERE THAT ARE...
Ting Ting
LARRY. LARRY! HANG ON! I'VE GOT ANOTHER CALL I'VE GOT TO TAKE. I'LL CALL YOU LATER.
tek
HELLO?
HELLO. THIS IS DOCTOR BLANCHARD. I WANTED TO CALL AND INFORM YOU THAT YOUR DAUGHTER HAS HAD ANOTHER 'EPISODE'. WE DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A FULL SEIZURE BUT, I THINK YOU SHOULD GET HERE AS SOON AS YOU CAN.
I'M ON MY WAY.
EXCUSE ME, MR. FITZGERALD? CAN I HAVE A WORD?
SORRY, BUD, BUT I'M KIND OF BUSY.
NOT ANYMORE.
YOUR COORDINATING SUPERVISOR NEEDS TO SEE YOU. NOW. SHE HAS SOME SERIOUS QUESTIONS SHE NEEDS ANSWERED.

Beep
THE PERSON YOU ARE TRYING TO REACH HAS NOT SET UP A MAILBOX. PLEASE CALL BACK LATER.
THANK YOU.
Beep
THIS IS BULLSHIT.
KNOCK
KNOCK
UH... GO AHEAD! COME RIGHT IN *WITHOUT* BEING INVITED. YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE COMING HERE AFTER ABANDONING ME LAST NIGHT. I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CALL YOU ALL MORNING.
I DIDN'T ABANDON YOU. YOU'LL HAVE TO TRUST ME ON THAT.
IS THAT RIGHT?
I JUST WANTED TO MAKE SURE YOU WERE ALRIGHT.
OH, I'M FAR FROM ALRIGHT!
I CAN'T EXPLAIN THINGS NOW-- IN TIME, BUT NOT NOW. WHAT I NEED TO KNOW IS WHETHER I CAN COUNT ON YOU AGAIN. OTHERWISE I NEED TO FIND SOMEONE ELSE. YOU SAW HOW UGLY IT CAN GET.
SO... YOU IN?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SOUTHPAWS
GY
IT'S LATE. THE GYM IS CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT.
UNLESS YOU'RE BUDDIES WITH THE OWNER.
LIKE EARL.
THUP
THUP
NICE HOOK OFF YOUR JAB
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU. SO, TURN AROUND AND WALK AWAY.

JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU SOMETHING.
DON'T NEED TO HEAR IT. I TOLD YOU... I'M OUT. I'M NOT DOING ANY MORE OF YOUR BULLSHIT.*
*See last issue—Todd
I KNOW.
AND BECAUSE OF YOU I'VE GOT NO RIDE. YOU'RE PAYING FOR MY VAN.
I KNOW THAT, TOO.
GOOD.
I NEED YOU TO KNOW THAT YOU HELPED PEOPLE LAST NIGHT.
MOST OF THEM YOUNG KIDS. THE KIND NOBODY GIVES A CRAP ABOUT.
IS THAT SO?
IT IS.
I ALSO UNDERSTAND YOU DON'T WANT TO BE BOTHERED.
SO, HERE'S SOMETHING TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR RIDE. YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO GET AN UPGRADE.

Jesus.
KEEP IT!
PEOPLE WITH THIS KIND OF CASH I DON'T NEED IN MY LIFE.
BUT WHAT IF THEY NEED YOU?
A FEW MINUTES LATER.
GODDAMN! WHY YOU FOLLOWING ME? I DON'T WANT YOUR BUSINESS. DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU'RE ABOUT. AND THAT NEARLY GOT ME KILLED.
BUT IT DIDN'T. JUST LIKE WHEN WE WERE MILITARY... SOMETIMES YOU GOTTA DO NASTY SHIT EVEN WHEN YOU'RE THE GOOD GUYS. YOU KNOW THAT. YOU FOLLOWED ORDERS TOO.
BUT THIS WAR I'M FIGHTING-- I CAN'T DO IT ALONE.
WHAT ARE YOU INTO, AL? CONVINCE ME. GIVE ME SOMETHING THAT SAYS I SHOULDN'T TELL THE COPS EVERYTHING ABOUT LAST NIGHT.

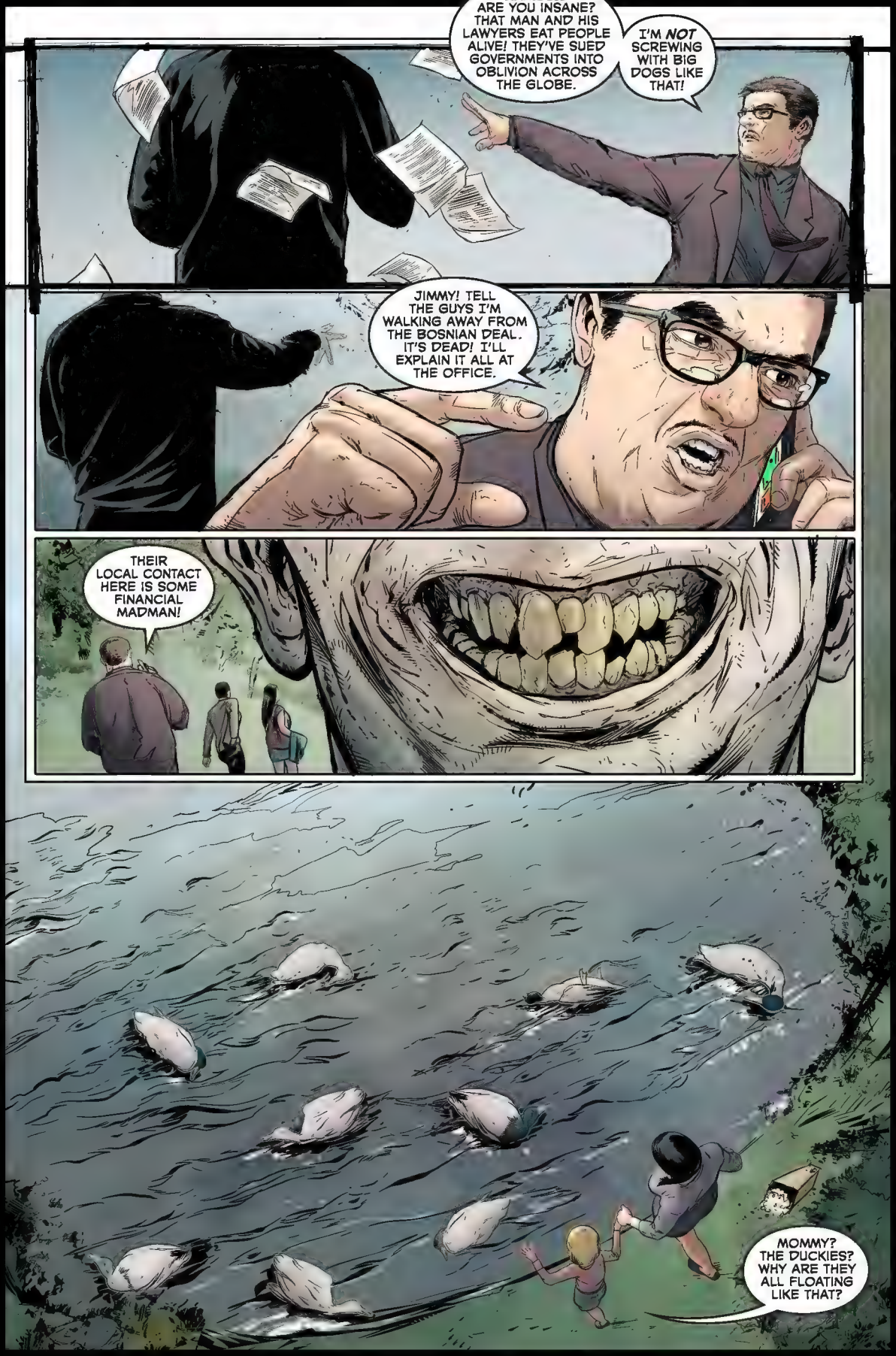
I'M KEEPING A PROMISE. AND FOLLOWING A PLAN. TRYING TO HELP A GIRL OUT AND A MILLION OTHERS LIKE HER THAT GET TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF EVERY DAY AROUND THIS PLANET.
THERE'S EVIL SHIT OUT THERE. TONS OF IT! AND I CAN DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT. BUT NOT SOLO.
SO, WHAT AM I DOING? I'M TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. THOUGHT YOU'D BE INTERESTED IN THAT TOO.
GUESS I HAD YOU WRONG.

HERE.
KEEP THE MONEY. IT'S ALL CLEAN.
OR GIVE IT AWAY. I DON'T CARE. DO WHAT YOU WANT.
THANKS FOR THE HELP LAST NIGHT.
EARL'S A GOOD MAN. BUT EVEN GOOD MEN NEED TO EAT.
AND SMART MEN: HARD-CORE, BATTLE SCARRED VETS LIKE EARL, THEY TRY GATHERING INTELLIGENCE BEFORE MAKING THEIR NEXT MOVE.

YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO FEED THE DUCKS. IT'S ILLEGAL.
SO'S THE 'OFFER' YOU'RE ABOUT TO MAKE.
STILL, YOU'RE EXPECTING ME TO INVEST IN YOUR COMPANY. PUTTING A SIZEABLE CHUNK OF MY PORTFOLIO AT RISK.
I'M ONLY EXPECTING WHAT YOUR PEOPLE SAID THEY WERE LOOKING FOR. YOUR CONTACT IN BOSNIA HUNTED ME DOWN.
AND YOU WERE MORE THAN WILLING TO LISTEN. DID ANY OF THEM GIVE YOU MY NAME?
NO. THEY JUST SAID FOR ME TO BE HERE. SOMEONE WOULD MEET ME.
SHADE. YOU CAN CALL ME SHADE.

SO... TELL ME YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF YOUR 'OFFER.'
YOU AND YOUR CONSORTIUM BUY A CONTROLLING INTEREST IN OUR COMPANY OVER THE NEXT THREE YEARS. WE MUTUALLY AGREE TO ALL BOARD MEMBERS AND EACH TRANCHE PAYMENT IS AT A TEN PERCENT PREMIUM OF CURRENT MARKET VALUES.
OUR TOP EXECUTIVES ARE RETAINED FOR TWO MORE YEARS PAST THE FINAL BUYOUT WITH SIGNIFICANT PAY-OUTS IF ANY EARLY TERMINATIONS OCCUR.
YES. DOES THAT MEET YOUR EXPECTA-TIONS?
THOSE WERE THE NEGOTIATED TERMS. BUT THEY SAID YOU HAD A FEW MINOR ADJUSTMENTS YOU NEEDED TO MAKE BEFORE SIGNING THESE CONTRACTS. HENCE THE REASON WE'RE HERE I'M ASSUMING.

HERE ARE MY 'ADJUSTMENTS.' A CASH DEPOSIT WILL BE MADE TO EACH OF YOUR EXECUTIVES. EIGHTY PERCENT OF THAT MONEY WILL THEN BE USED TO BUY STOCKS IN THE COMPANIES WE TELL YOU. THEN IN THE FUTURE, WHEN WE TELL YOU, YOU'LL SELL THOSE STOCKS AND RETURN ALL PROFITS TO US THROUGH A SOPHISTICATED METHOD WE'LL TEACH YOU.
IN RETURN WE ACQUIRE YOUR COMPANY, WHICH HAS BEEN IN DESPERATE NEED OF A CASH INFUSION, FOR A VERY GENEROUS AMOUNT.
YOU WANT ME TO LAUNDER MONEY FOR YOU?
I WANT YOU AND YOUR PARTNERS TO SAVE YOUR BUSINESS. NOTHING MORE.
THEN WHY NOT DO IT YOURSELF?
THE MEN I DEAL WITH ENJOY THEIR ANONYMITY. FROM TIME TO TIME WE NEED OTHERS TO FACILITATE SOME OF THEIR NEEDS.
IN THIS CASE THEY HAVE A DRIVING HUNGER TO SEND A MESSAGE TO THE RAMUS TECHNOLOGY CORPORATION.


RAMUS!? ARE YOU INSANE? THAT MAN AND HIS LAWYERS EAT PEOPLE ALIVE! THEY'VE SUED GOVERNMENTS INTO OBLIVION ACROSS THE GLOBE.
I'M NOT SCREWING WITH BIG DOGS LIKE THAT!
JIMMY! TELL THE GUYS I'M WALKING AWAY FROM THE BOSNIAN DEAL. IT'S DEAD! I'LL EXPLAIN IT ALL AT THE OFFICE.
THEIR LOCAL CONTACT HERE IS SOME FINANCIAL MADMAN!
MOMMY? THE DUCKIES? WHY ARE THEY ALL FLOATING LIKE THAT?

FOR A DAY AND A HALF, EARL HAS SPENT TIME TAILING AL SIMMONS.
KEEPING HIS DISTANCE, WHILE USING EVERY TRICK HE LEARNED FROM THE MILITARY AND THE STREETS.
AND WHEN AL DISAPPEARED ONTO A ROOFTOP HE KNEW SOMETHING WAS GEARING UP.
WHAT THE F--! DON'T BUG OUT NOW.
tap tap
WHEN THE SCOPE REFOCUSES, EARL IS GREETED BY A BLACK-CLAD SPECTER THAT APPEARS TO BE STARING BACK AT HIM.
AL? WHO ARE YOU?

THE GAME IS ABOUT TO BEGIN.
EARL, IN PURSUIT, IDLY WONDERS HOW HE COULD HAVE MISSED THAT AL MAY SOMEHOW BE DIFFERENT.
SECONDS LATER AL DISAPPEARS AGAIN ON TOP OF A BUILDING RUN BY SOME MID-LEVEL DRUG GANG.
AFTER THE DOCK INCIDENT, EARL CAN ONLY GUESS WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

DIRTY MONEY.
DRUGS.
GUNS.
THEY'RE JUST SYMPTOMS.
THE REAL ILLNESS IS THE PLEASURE SOME MEN TAKE LORDING OVER VICTIMS OF THESE CORRUPT VICES.
AL'S HAD IT WITH ALL OF THEM.
WITH THE DOORS TO HEAVEN AND HELL FINALLY LOCKED HIS 'PLAN' IS NOW IN FULL FORCE.
AND THERE'LL BE NO MERCY FROM ITS PATH.

CRAK
BORN TO RIDE
THOSE PROTECTING THEIR INTERESTS BELIEVE FEAR AND POWER IS THE BEST WAY TO MEET THIS BLACK CLAD INTRUDER. "LET'S SEE HIM STARE DOWN A SHOTGUN BARREL" THEY THINK.
THAT WILL SLOW HIM DOWN.
INSTEAD... AL CLEARS MOST OF THE ROOM IN THREE POINT SEVEN SECONDS.
BUT THE LAST ONE STANDING HE'S... JUST A CHILD. IT CAUSES AL TO HESITATE A FRACTION.

AL!
SHIT!
COME ON, MAN. I GOT YOU.
I'M OKAY.
THE HELL YOU ARE! BUT WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE-- FAST!
HE'S GOT DOZENS OF QUESTIONS BURSTING TO GET OUT, BUT EARL KNOWS THAT SURVIVAL TAKES PRECEDENCE AT MOMENTS LIKE THIS.
THEY'LL COME LOOKING FOR YOU.

YOU STILL HAVEN'T GIVEN ME AN ANSWER.
I'M STILL THINKING.
THEN WHY FOLLOW ME? IF YOU WERE DONE, YOU'D BE DONE, NOT DRAGGING ME BACK HERE TO PATCH ME UP.
CALL IT A FAVOR.
I GET THAT. YOU HAVE MY THANKS AGAIN. BUT IF YOU'RE NOT GOING TO COMMIT TO THIS THEN I NEED YOU TO DO *ME* A FAVOR.
YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?
DON'T FOLLOW ME AGAIN.
FUNNY. THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO SAY "HEY, EARL, THANKS FOR SAVING MY ASS OUT THERE, I APPRECIATE IT, DUDE."
DON'T FOLLOW ME AGAIN.

I DON'T NEED THE DISTRAC-TION.
DISTRACTION? WOW. YOU'RE THE ONE RUNNING AROUND IN YOUR BLACK PAJAMAS.
IT'S A COSTUME.
WHATEVER IT IS I DON'T GET IT. NONE OF IT. YOU'VE GOT MONEY. HARDCORE MILITARY WEAPONS AND A BUNCH OF SECRETS I'M SURE YOU CAN'T TELL ME. SO HOW YOU CALLING ME THE DISTRACTION?
I'M NOT TRYING TO TALK YOU INTO ANYTHING YOU'RE NOT COMFORTABLE WITH. I JUST NEED TO KNOW WHO I CAN AND CAN'T TRUST.
AND YOU THINK I CAN HELP YOU?
DON'T KNOW YET.
I'M SKEPTICAL. BUT IF I WASN'T... WHAT DO YOU FIGURE THAT WOULD INVOLVE?
MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE... TRUSTING ME.
THE MONEY-- WHERE'S THAT COMING FROM?

I TOLD YOU IT'S CLEAN.
≥cough≤ ≥cough≤
EARL?
I'M HERE, MOM.
MY OXYGEN. I NEED YOU TO ADJUST IT AGAIN.
SURE.
YOU'VE GOT THAT LOOK ON YOUR FACE, SON. WHAT'S WRONG?
JUST... TRYING TO FIGURE SOMETHING OUT.
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN EASY SOLUTION. THOSE DON'T EXIST. DOING RIGHT DON'T COME EASY. BUT YOU'RE MY BOY-- AND YOU AND ME. WE WAS BUILT STRONG.
DON'T YOU LET LIFE GET THE BETTER OF YOU...
...YOU HEAR ME? YOUR DADDY NEVER LEARNED THAT AND IT KILLED HIM IN THE LONG RUN. SO, IF WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW SEEMS OVER-WHELMING--FEELS LIKE IT'S GOING TO CONSUME YOU--THEN IT MUST BE SOMETHING BIG. SOME-THING IMPORTANT.
BUT I RAISED YOU TO ≥COUGH≤ ≥COUGH≤... I RAISED YOU TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG. SO STOP THINKING SO MUCH, YOU'RE HEART ALREADY HAS THE ANSWER FOR YOU.
NOW YOU GET. I COULD HEAR YOU'VE GOT COMPANY IN THE OTHER ROOM.

EVERY-THING OKAY WITH YOUR MOM?
THAT WOMAN IN THERE-- DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH SHIT SHE'S ENDURED? HOW MANY YEARS SHE SACRIFICED HERSELF FOR HER FAMILY? AND WHAT DID IT GET HER? *NOTHING!* ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! BUT NOT ONCE, I CAN'T REMEMBER A SINGLE TIME, SHE EVER FELT SORRY FOR HERSELF.
NOW LOOK AT HER. SHE'S BARELY ABLE TO BREATHE.
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH OXYGEN COSTS?
I DON'T.
MORE THAN I'VE GOT. WAY MORE.
ALL RIGHT. I'M IN. I'LL JOIN YOU-- FOR NOW. BUT I AIN'T WEARING NO SILLY COSTUME.
GOOD. 'CAUSE I'VE ONLY GOT ONE. AND I PROMISE, YOU WON'T BE SORRY YOU MADE THIS DECISION.
WELCOME ABOARD PARTNER.

MR. FITZGERALD RECENTLY LISTED YOU AS FAMILY, MR. SMITH, SO YOU HAVE FULL VISITATION RIGHTS. WHICH ALLOWS YOU TO COME ANYTIME YOU WISH EXCEPT BETWEEN THE HOURS OF MIDNIGHT AND SEVEN A.M.
THANK YOU. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO GET IN TOUCH WITH MR. FITZGERALD-- HAVE YOU HEARD FROM HIM TODAY?
NO, I DON'T BELIEVE SO.
CYAN KNOWS YOU'RE HERE. I'LL BUZZ YOU THROUGH. YOU CAN LET YOURSELF IN.
HEY THERE.
WANTED TO COME BY. SEE HOW YOU'RE DOING. AND JUST SAY HI.
SO... HI.

YOUR DAY-- HOW WAS IT? DO ANYTHING INTERESTING?
THEY DON'T LET US DO INTERESTING THINGS HERE.
THAT'S TOO BAD. PROBABLY HAVE THEIR SILLY REASONS FOR THAT. SO... UM...
LOOK. I'M REALLY NOT VERY GOOD AT THIS, CYAN. DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT TO SAY.
DAD HASN'T COME TO SEE ME.
WHAT? FOR HOW LONG?
AWHILE.
YOU WANT ME TO DO SOMETHING?
TURN OFF MY LIGHTS.
TEK
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME YOU'VE ASKED ME TO DO THAT. WHY?

SO IT'S EASIER TO SEE YOU.
CLOSE YOUR EYES.
NOW OPEN THEM.
THERE YOU ARE.
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU.

"IT'S TIME FOR US TO GO."
TO BE CONTINUED

SPAWN
image
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GONE!
THIS INSTITUTION HAD NEVER LOST A PATIENT BEFORE IN ITS 84-YEAR HISTORY.
WHAT STARTED AS A ROUTINE CHECK OF THEIR PATIENT'S ROOMS. ENDED WITH THE REALIZATION A YOUNG PATIENT HAD DISAPPEARED.
HER NAME IS CYAN FITZGERALD. SHE'S BEEN REHABBING FROM AN ADDICTION PROBLEM AND HAD A VISITOR IN HER ROOM AT THE TIME.
THE VISITOR WAS AL SIMMONS, THOUGH HE WAS USING AN ALIAS, BUT HE WAS MISSING TOO.
HAD SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THEM? OR DID SIMMONS TAKE CYAN ON HIS OWN?

I ALERTED THE ADMINISTRATION. THEY'RE SENDING PEOPLE OVER NOW. WHAT ABOUT MR. FITZGERALD? ANY LUCK YET?
HE ISN'T ANSWERING. AT HOME OR HIS CELL.
KEEP TRYING. HE NEEDS TO KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENED TO HIS DAUGHTER.
89%
03-0127
TZGERALD
WE'RE GOING TO NEED TO GET D.N.A. SAMPLES FROM ALL STAFF MEMBERS. PLUS A LIST OF EVERYONE THAT'S EVER VISITED THE FITZGERALD GIRL.
LINE DO
POLICE
"AND WE'LL NEED ANY INFORMATION YOU HAVE ON THE MAN WITH HER WHEN SHE DISAPPEARED. WHO DO I TALK TO ABOUT LOOKING AT YOUR SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS? THAT'LL GIVE US SOME CLUES..."

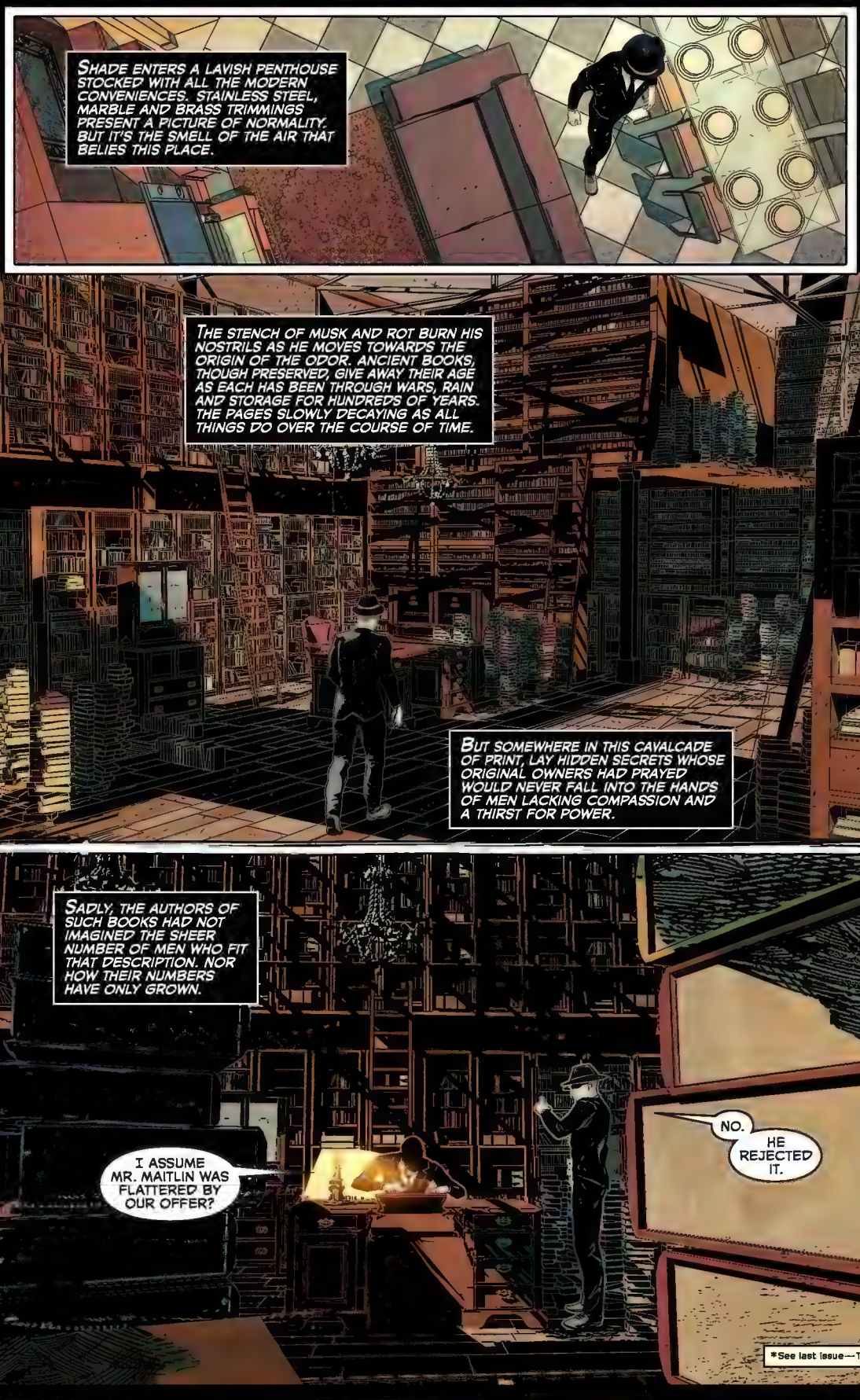
"...BECAUSE PEOPLE DON'T JUST UP AND VANISH."
SOMEWHERE.
DARK.

They collapse, physically spent from their trip through 'the black.'

HOW'D YOU DO THAT?!
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
MY APARTMENT.
BUT IT'S TWENTY MILES FROM WHERE WE JUST WERE. SO, YOU NEED TO TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON. WHAT DID YOU DO TO US?
I'M HUNGRY.
YOU GOT ANYTHING GOOD TO EAT?
LISTEN TO ME. WE JUST DISAPPEARED FROM THE FACILITY YOU WERE AT. WHEN THEY FIND OUT YOU'RE GONE, A ***SHITSTORM*** IS GOING TO HIT! COPS. F.B.I. EVERYONE WILL BE LOOKING FOR YOU!

THE PROBLEM WITH THAT--THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR ME TOO. I DON'T NEED THAT RIGHT NOW. SO, WHATEVER YOU DID... TAKE US BACK!
YOU TALK TOO MUCH.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'RE SO AFRAID OF THEM ANYWAY.

As new york's evening sky paints itself across the horizon, a busy work day is winding down for millions.
For others, their day has only begun to reveal itself.
Evening, Mr. Shade.
Is he in?
He's always in, sir. You know that.
Just making sure you're on your toes. Can't get nothing by you, can they? You're too smart for that.
Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

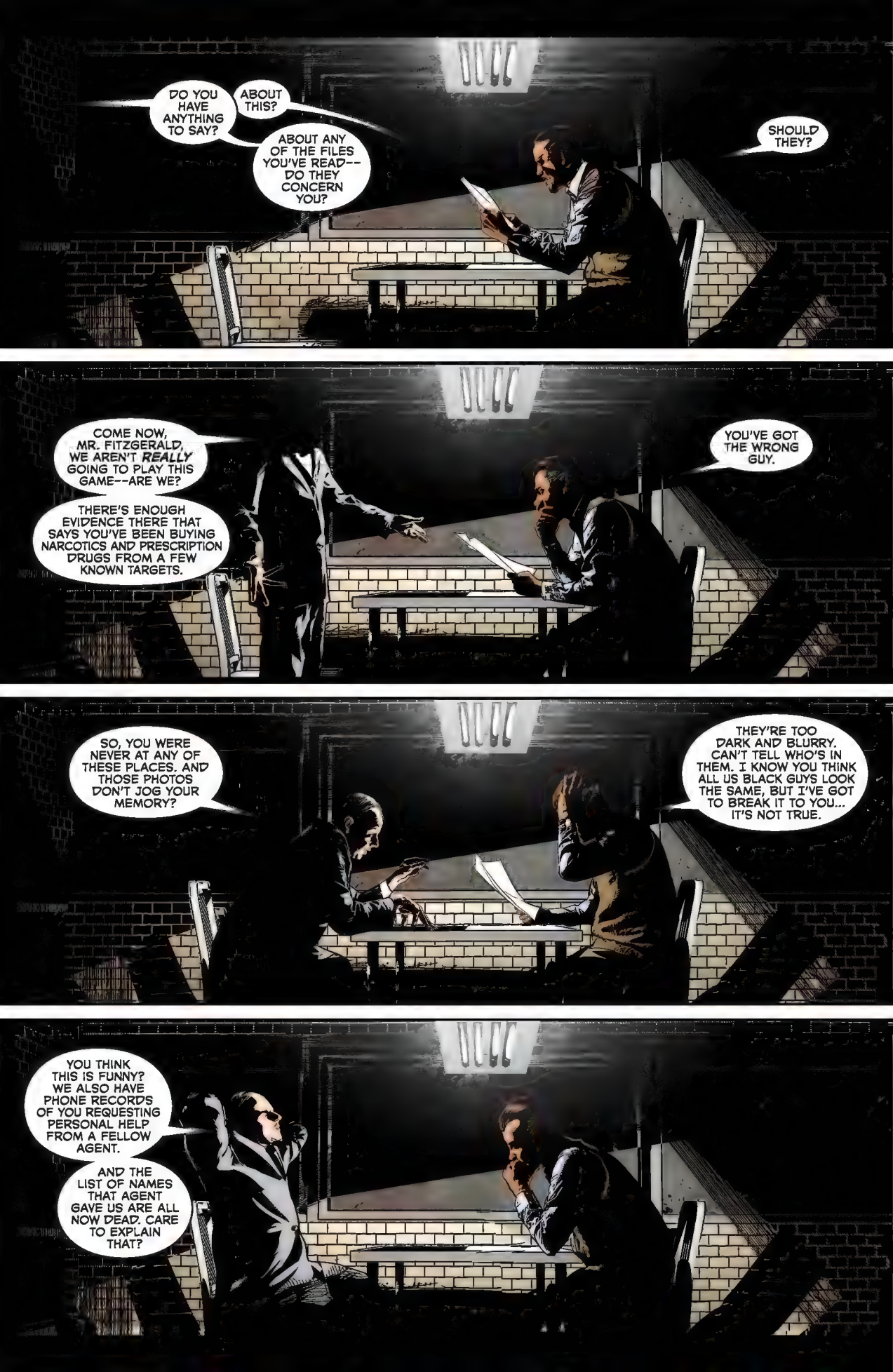

SHADE ENTERS A LAVISH PENTHOUSE STOCKED WITH ALL THE MODERN CONVENIENCES. STAINLESS STEEL, MARBLE AND BRASS TRIMMINGS PRESENT A PICTURE OF NORMALITY. BUT IT'S THE SMELL OF THE AIR THAT BELIES THIS PLACE.
THE STENCH OF MUSK AND ROT BURN HIS NOSTRILS AS HE MOVES TOWARDS THE ORIGIN OF THE ODOR. ANCIENT BOOKS, THOUGH PRESERVED, GIVE AWAY THEIR AGE AS EACH HAS BEEN THROUGH WARS, RAIN AND STORAGE FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS. THE PAGES SLOWLY DECAYING AS ALL THINGS DO OVER THE COURSE OF TIME.
BUT SOMEWHERE IN THIS CAVALCADE OF PRINT, LAY HIDDEN SECRETS WHOSE ORIGINAL OWNERS HAD PRAYED WOULD NEVER FALL INTO THE HANDS OF MEN LACKING COMPASSION AND A THIRST FOR POWER.
SADLY, THE AUTHORS OF SUCH BOOKS HAD NOT IMAGINED THE SHEER NUMBER OF MEN WHO FIT THAT DESCRIPTION. NOR HOW THEIR NUMBERS HAVE ONLY GROWN.
I ASSUME MR. MAITLIN WAS FLATTERED BY OUR OFFER?
NO.
HE REJECTED IT.
*See last issue — Todd

THE SILENCE OF THE MAN SITTING TELLS US HE'S UNACCUSTOMED TO NOT HAVING HIS WAY. AFTER A LONG PAUSE HE GOES BACK TO WRITING, WITH BOTH HANDS SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN A LANGUAGE LONG SINCE LOST.
I WAS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO SPENDING TIME WITH MR. MAITLIN AND HIS PARTNERS. HOW UNFORTUNATE WE WEREN'T ABLE TO SEE EYE TO EYE.
I DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO IGNORE THE PUSH WE GAVE HIM.
STUBBORN, IS HE?
PERHAPS IT MAY SERVE OUR NEEDS BETTER IF I PAY HIM... A MORE 'PERSONAL' VISIT.

SOME MEN NEED A LITTLE GUIDANCE TO SEE THE ERROR OF THEIR WAYS.
BUT FOR OTHERS...
IT TAKES MUCH MORE FOR THEM TO SEE THE LIGHT.

THE PAIN NOW OVER, SIMMONS' CHAINS RETREAT INSIDE HIM.
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND WHY CYAN DID THAT TO HIM. HE NEEDS TO FIND HER HELP. FAST.
CYAN... I...
AL STOPS HIMSELF. NOT ABLE TO FIND THE WORDS OR THE PROPER QUESTION TO ASK. AND UNTIL HE DOES HE'S NOT INCLINED TO MAKE THINGS WORSE.
INSTEAD HE TRIES TO COMFORT HER.
WE NEED A LITTLE LIGHT IN HERE.
DON'T!
NO! NO!
STOP!
BUT THAT BACKFIRES AS THE SUN'S SOOTHING RAY FEEL LIKE KNIVES FLAYING AT HER SKIN!
UNCONTROLLABLY SHE SCREAMS AT THE TOP OF HER LUNGS. AL CAN'T HAVE THAT KIND OF ATTENTION--NOT IN THIS APARTMENT COMPLEX. THERE'S TOO MANY CURIOUS NEIGHBORS IN THE BUILDING.
CYAN! YOU CAN'T DO THAT. NOT HERE! CALM DOWN AND RELAX. CAN YOU DO THAT?
HE STEPS BACK INTO THE SHADOWS...
SHE INSTANTLY GOES LIMP.

SHE LIKES THE DARK NOT THE SUN. BUT WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL LIGHT? HOW WILL SHE REACT TO THAT?
YOU OKAY?
YEAH.
UM...
WHERE ARE WE?
MY APARTMENT.
HOW'D WE GET HERE?
DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
NO. WHY AREN'T WE IN MY ROOM?
STUNNED, AL REALIZES CYAN CAN'T RECALL THE LAST FEW MINUTES. EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED IN THE DARK AND THE SHADOWS ARE A BLANK TO HER.
WE NEED TO CALL YOUR DAD.


DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY?
ABOUT THIS?
ABOUT ANY OF THE FILES YOU'VE READ-- DO THEY CONCERN YOU?
SHOULD THEY?
COME NOW, MR. FITZGERALD, WE AREN'T *REALLY* GOING TO PLAY THIS GAME--ARE WE?
THERE'S ENOUGH EVIDENCE THERE THAT SAYS YOU'VE BEEN BUYING NARCOTICS AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS FROM A FEW KNOWN TARGETS.
YOU'VE GOT THE WRONG GUY.
SO, YOU WERE NEVER AT ANY OF THESE PLACES. AND THOSE PHOTOS DON'T JOG YOUR MEMORY?
THEY'RE TOO DARK AND BLURRY. CAN'T TELL WHO'S IN THEM. I KNOW YOU THINK ALL US BLACK GUYS LOOK THE SAME, BUT I'VE GOT TO BREAK IT TO YOU... IT'S NOT TRUE.
YOU THINK THIS IS FUNNY? WE ALSO HAVE PHONE RECORDS OF YOU REQUESTING PERSONAL HELP FROM A FELLOW AGENT.
AND THE LIST OF NAMES THAT AGENT GAVE US ARE ALL NOW DEAD. CARE TO EXPLAIN THAT?

OR WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO GO FIRST?
YOU'RE THE ONE THROWING THE PARTY HERE, BUD.
I KNOW YOU GOT THOSE DRUGS FOR YOUR DAUGHTER. BEEN FEEDING THEM TO HER FOR QUITE SOME TIME IF SHE'S IN NEED OF REHABILITATION. IMPRESSIVE FATHERING THERE, I MIGHT ADD. WE ALSO KNOW YOU WERE GIVEN THE NAME OF MIGUEL SABATINI BY AGENT JOHNSON. WHO'S CURRENTLY BEEN TAKEN TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE GLOBE.
HE'LL NEVER WORK FOR THIS AGENCY AGAIN. AND NEITHER WILL YOU IF WE DON'T GET YOUR COOPERATION.
IS THIS WHERE I'M SUPPOSED TO GET SCARED?
NO, MR. FITZGERALD. THIS IS WHERE YOU BECOME PRACTICAL...
WHERE SELF-PRESERVATION KICKS IN. SEE, IT'S NOT YOU WE'RE AFTER. INSTEAD WE WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING YOU KNEW ABOUT AL SIMMONS. EVERYTHING.
SIMMONS IS DEAD.
SO, WE'VE BEEN TOLD.

BUT, WE'D LIKE TO CONFIRM THAT OURSELVES SINCE HE WAS INVOLVED IN SOME VERY, VERY SENSITIVE MATTERS. BUT I'M SURE YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT SINCE YOU WERE HIS BEST FRIEND. STRANGE THAT YOU MARRIED HIS WIFE AFTER HE DIED.
YOU KNOW SHE'S DEAD TOO.
WE DO.
BUT YOUR DAUGHTER ISN'T. IS SHE?
YOU TOUCH HER AND...
"SAVE YOUR THREATS. WE'VE HEARD IT ALL BEFORE. AND YOU'RE NOT IN MUCH OF A POSITION TO THREATEN, ARE YOU."
CURIOUS THOUGH?
WHY DO YOU THINK THE HOSPITAL WHERE CYAN IS STAYING HAS TRIED TO CALL YOU TEN TIMES IN THE LAST WHILE? MUST BE QUITE AN EMERGENCY GOING ON THERE. I WONDER WHAT IT COULD BE?
Enter Passcode
10 MISSED CALLS
WHAT DO YOU WANT.
I TOLD YOU ALREADY, I WANT SIMMONS. AND EVERYTHING YOU CAN POSSIBLY TELL US ABOUT HIM. THEN YOU GET YOUR PHONE BACK.

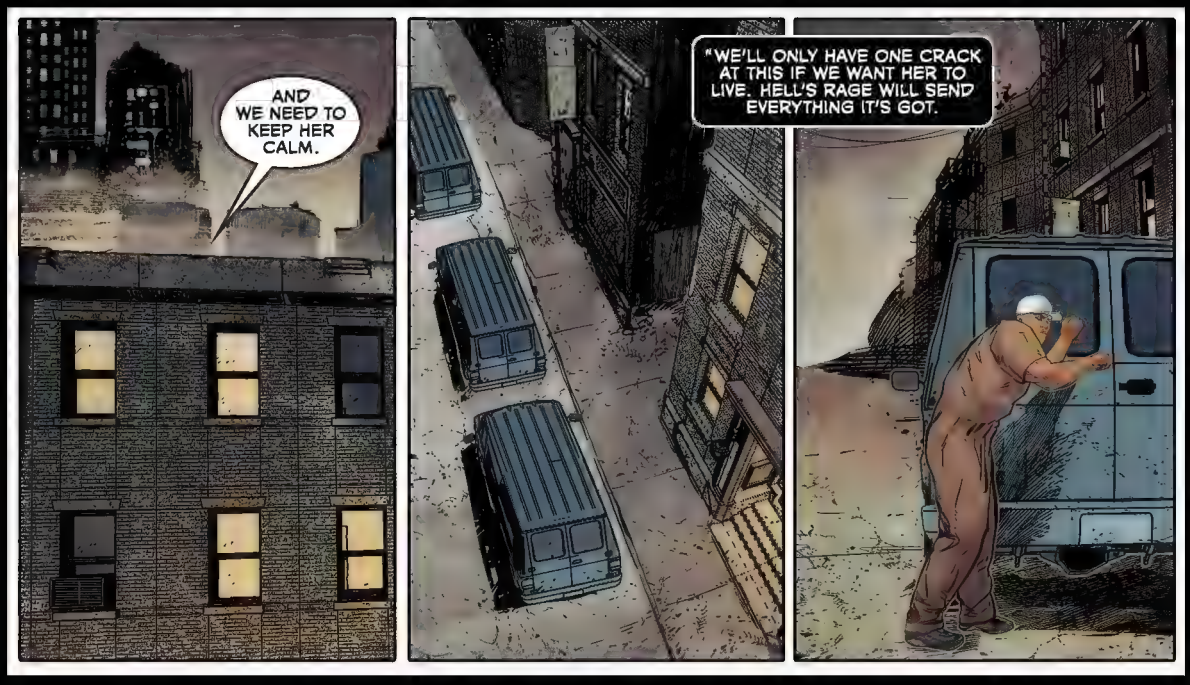
SCANDINAVIA.
DEEP IN THE COASTAL CONIFER FORESTS.

AWAY FROM THE TARNISH OF MANKIND.
FELT YOU COMING A LONG WAY OFF.

YOU'LL NEED TO IMPROVE THAT.
THOUGH I'M CURIOUS-- HOW'D YOU FIND ME?
I DIDN'T. THE COSTUME DID.
OF COURSE.
WELL... IT BROUGHT YOU HERE FOR SOME REASON. SO, SPEAK UP BOY, WHAT DO YOU NEED?
CYAN. WANDA'S DAUGHTER. SHE TOUCHED ME AND... I THINK SOMETHING'S HAPPENING TO HER.

IT'S BEGUN, THEN.
WHAT'S THAT MEAN?
NOTHING. WHERE IS SHE NOW?
SLEEPING. IN MY APARTMENT.
YOU'VE GOT THE GIRL?
YES.
AND YOU'VE LEFT HER ALONE!?
IT'S ONLY BEEN A COUPLE MINUTES.
YOU FOOL! YOU GODDAMN FOOL! IT DOESN'T MATTER! SHE CAN'T BE ALONE. IT'S TOO DANGEROUS!
GET ME TO HER. NOW!
SPAWN'S BLOOD RED CAPE SWALLOWS COGLIOSTRO IN ITS MAW THEN DISSOLVES BOTH OF THEM INTO THE NIGHT.

I CAME TO YOU LOOKING FOR HELP.
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING. THEY'LL BE COMING FOR HER SOON AND YOU'LL NEED TO BE FOCUSED.
WHO'S COMING?
THEY ARE. THE ONES YOU *LOCKED ON EARTH* WHEN YOU SHUT THE GATES OF HELL. SHE WAS SAFER WHEN SHE WAS AMONG THE HUMANS.
WHAT DO THEY WANT?
EVERYTHING.
YOU SAID SHE TOUCHED YOU. WAS SHE IN THE DARK WHEN IT HAPPENED?
YOU MEAN OUTSIDE?
OUTSIDE. INSIDE. LIGHTS OFF. A SHADOW. ANY OF IT! WAS IT DARK?
YEAH.
WE NEED TO KEEP HER IN THE LIGHT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. EVEN IF IT'S A LAMP.



TO BE CONTINUED

SPAWN
MORTUUS EST ANTE REX
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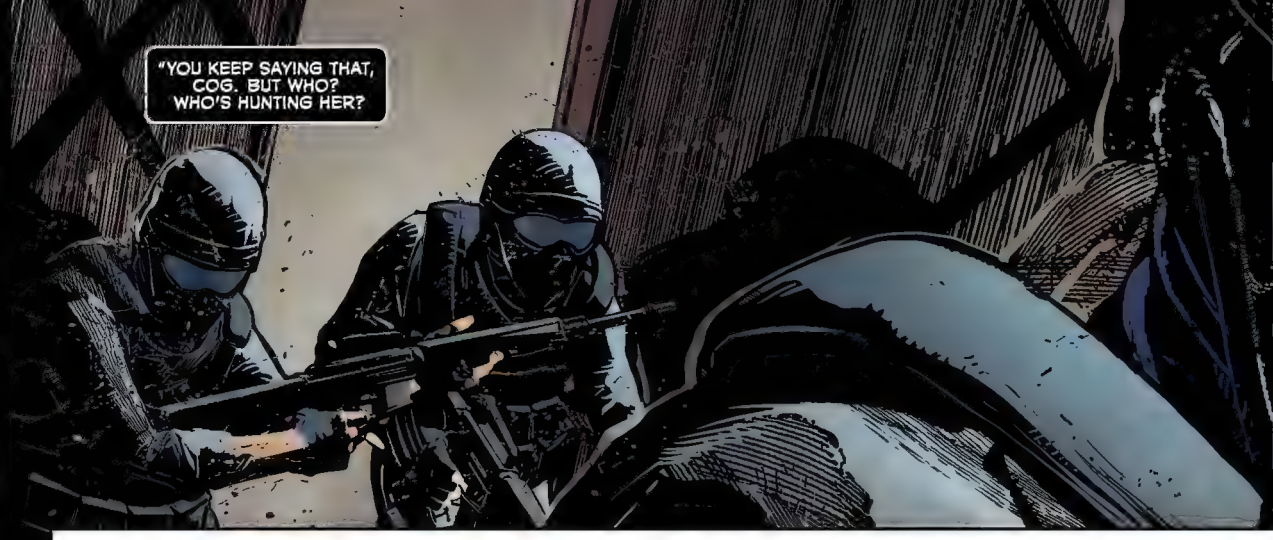
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'RE SCARED? SCARED OF WHAT?
THAT YOU FOUND ME. THAT *SHOULDN'T* HAVE HAPPENED.
I'VE ALREADY SAID, I DIDN'T FIND YOU. THE COSTUME DID.
NO IT DIDN'T. *NOT* ON ITS OWN. IT HAD HELP FROM THE GIRL.
SHE HAS A NAME.
I KNOW.
THEN USE IT. IT'S CYAN, NOT "THE GIRL."
WHAT I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU IS IF YOU'RE NOT IN FULL CONTROL OF THE COSTUME RIGHT NOW--WHICH YOU AREN'T--THEN SOMEONE ELSE IS. AND IT HAS TO BE HER.
HOW?
GODDAMMIT, AL! I *DON'T KNOW.* I'LL WORRY ABOUT THAT LATER. BUT SHE'S EXPOSED HERSELF TO THEM! WHICH MEANS THEY'LL MAKE IT THEIR PERSONAL MISSION TO FIND HER!


"YOU KEEP SAYING THAT, COG. BUT WHO? WHO'S HUNTING HER?

THIS IS HELL
OK
S.W.A.T

S.W.A.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE'S AT.
THEN I'D FIX THAT. BUT RIGHT NOW...

S.W.A.T.
"ALL OF THEM. EVERY SINGLE ONE THAT YOU IMPRISONED ON EARTH WHEN YOU LOCKED THE 'DEAD ZONE.' I DON'T CARE IF THEY'RE FROM HEAVEN OR HELL. THEY DON'T WANT TO BE HERE FULL-TIME."

SO, THEY'LL SCORCH THE EARTH LOOKING FOR A "KEY" TO UNLOCK IT. CYAN MIGHT BE THEIR KEY.

YOU REALLY THINK THAT?

I DO.
YOU NEED TO GET CYAN AWAY FROM HERE AND FIND HER FATHER. SHE'S GOING TO NEED HIM.

"...GET TO THE BEDROOM! IT'S BEGUN."

KRAK
IT'S CLEAR!
S.W.A.T
S.W.A.T
CHECK THE BEDROOM!
S.W.A

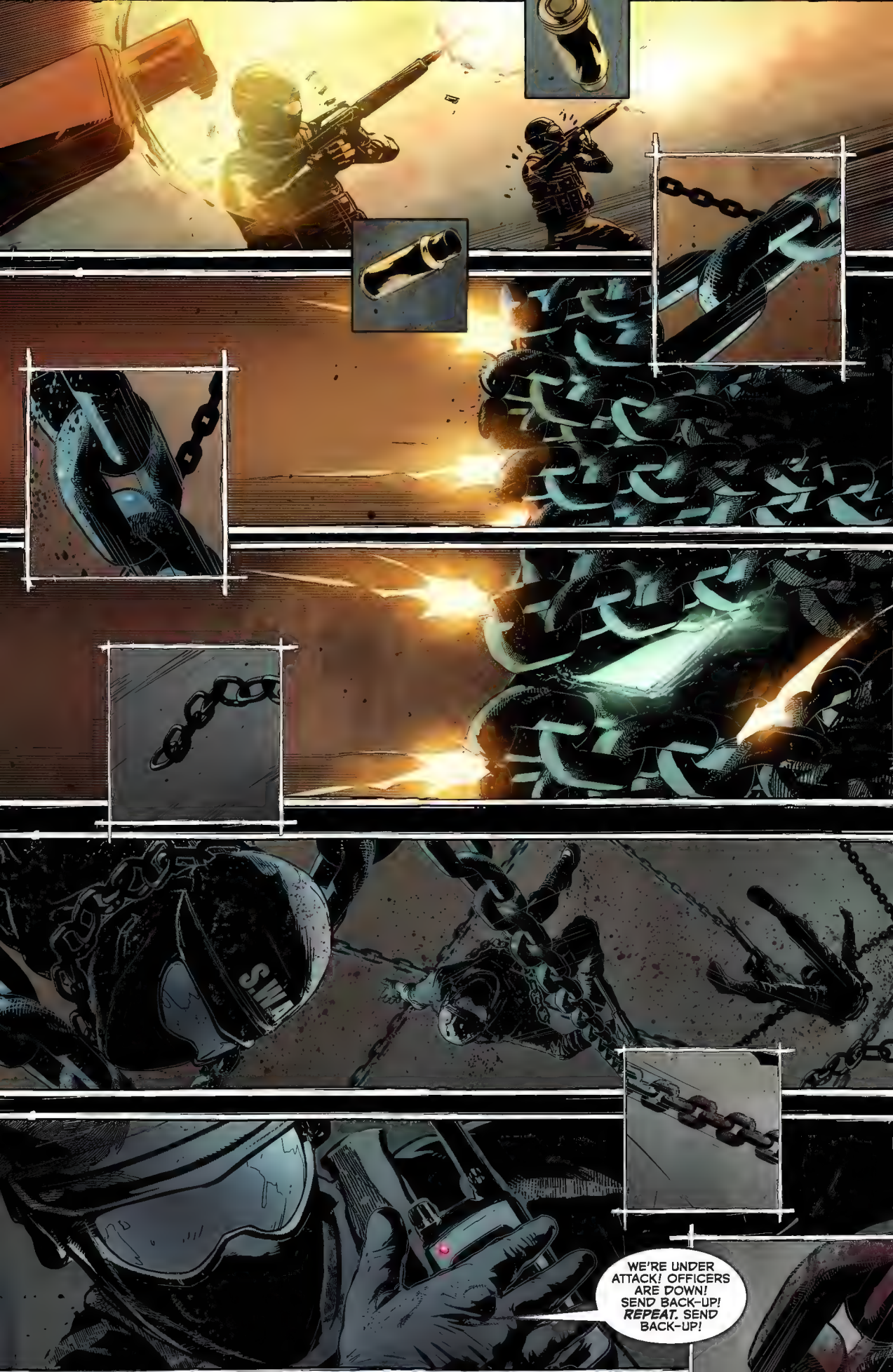
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU HEARD THEM, BUT WHATEVER HAPPENS NEXT... THEY DON'T TOUCH CYAN.
NO.
THERE'S TOO MANY. YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM LIKE THAT. AND THEY'RE NOT HERE FOR HER, THEY'VE COME FOR YOU. YOU'RE STILL DANGEROUS TO A LOT OF PEOPLE TOO.
YOUR CHAINS. YOU SAID THEY WERE WORKING. THEN USE THEM.
COVER CYAN. I'LL CREATE THE DISTRACTION.

SMASH
FREEZE!
CLEAR!
S.W.A.T.
CLEAR!
S.W.A.T.
NO ONE'S HERE, SARGE. IT'S ALL CLEAR.
SHINK

"AL, I CAN'T HOLD MY INVISIBLE CLOAK MUCH LONGER.

"IT'S OKAY. I'LL TAKE OVER NOW. HIDE CYAN. ON THE COUNT OF THREE YOU GO.

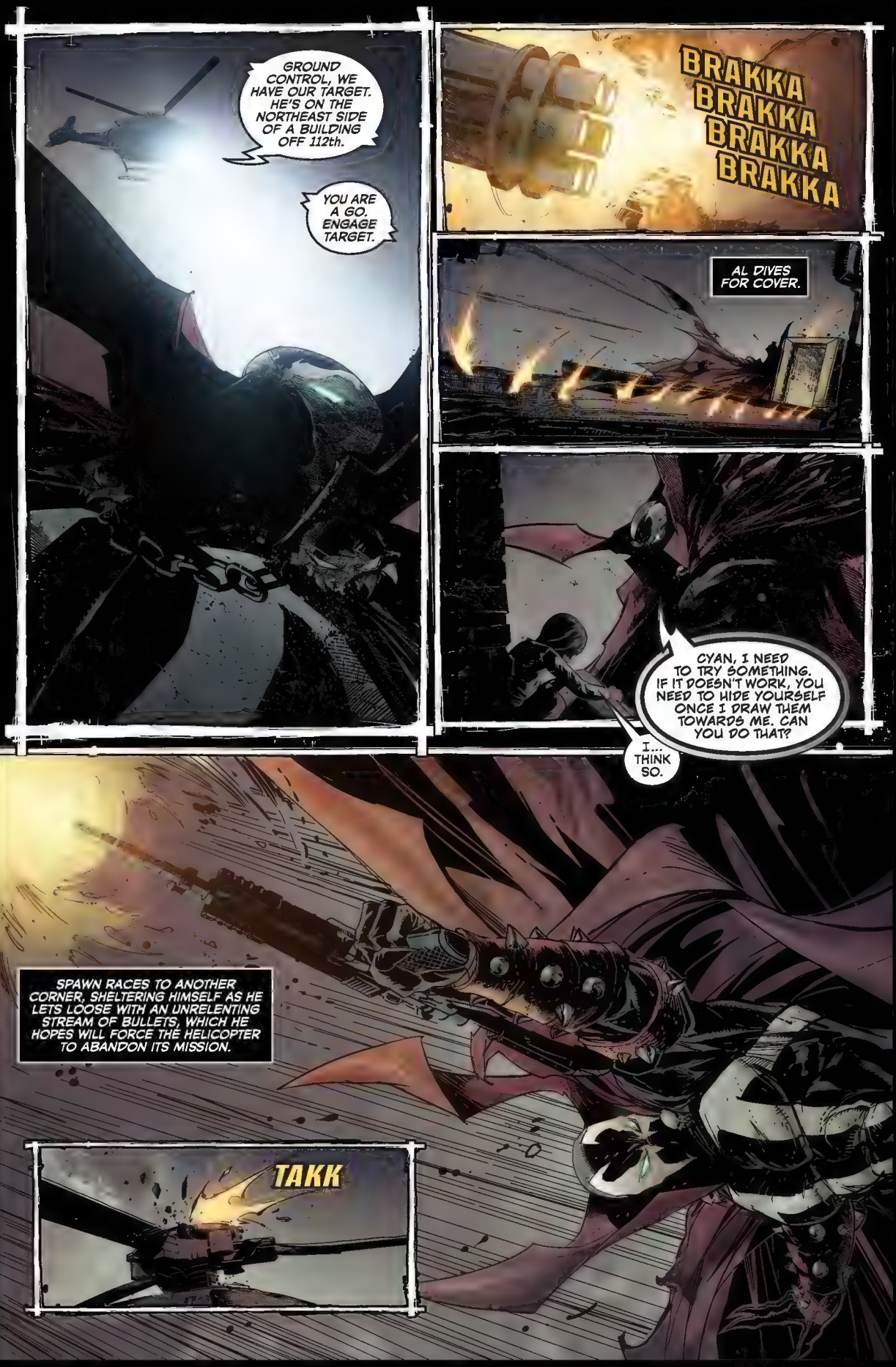
...THREE!
IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, AL SUMMONS HIS COSTUME. THOUGH HE KNOWS IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A THIN PROTECTIVE LAYER IT'S HIS CHAINS HE WANTS. THEY'VE BEEN THE ONLY PART OF HIS COSTUME HE'S HAD ANY CONNECTION TO.
AND RIGHT NOW IF HE'S GOING TO SURVIVE THAT CONNECTION NEEDS TO ENCASE HIM WITH THAT BOND.


SWAT
WE'RE UNDER ATTACK! OFFICERS ARE DOWN! SEND BACK-UP! *REPEAT.* SEND BACK-UP!

WHEN S.W.A.T. REINFORCEMENTS REACH THE FOURTH FLOOR, THEIR ENTRANCE IS BLOCKED BY A MASSIVE WALL OF LINKED STEEL.
I'M GOING TO CHECK THE FIRE ESCAPE.
AL, MY POWERS ARE DEPLETED. I CAN'T HELP YOU ANYMORE.
AL DIDN'T NEED TO HEAR THAT, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT HE SEES AIR SUPPORT HAS ENTERED THE FRAY.
PLUS, THEY SEEMINGLY HAVE MEN STATIONED EVERYWHERE.

SO, HE'S GOING TO NEED MORE FIREPOWER TO EVEN HIS ODDS.
BUT WHAT'S GNAWING AT THE BACK OF HIS BRAIN, IS HE KNOWS THESE MEN ARE JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS JUST LIKE HE DID FOR YEARS. THEY'RE NOT THE TRUE ENEMY, SO HE MAKES SURE TO HIT THEM IN THEIR PROTECTIVE VEST INSTEAD OF ANY VITAL ORGANS.
THEY'LL ALL HAVE A FEW BROKEN RIBS FROM THE BULLET'S IMPACT, BUT THEY'LL LIVE.
GET OUT OF THE WAY, COG! IF YOU CAN'T PROTECT HER, THEN I WILL!

TWO COILS OF CHAINS LASH OUT, SMASHING INTO THE BUILDING ACROSS THE STREET AND THEN ANCHORING THEMSELVES.
SPAWN CATAPULTS HIMSELF AND CYAN TO WHERE HE HOPES WILL BE SOME SAFETY.
CRAASH
HE UNWRAPS CYAN TO SEE IF SHE'S ALRIGHT. SHE IS.
AL IS INTENT ON KEEPING IT THAT WAY.


GROUND CONTROL, WE HAVE OUR TARGET. HE'S ON THE NORTHEAST SIDE OF A BUILDING OFF 112th.
YOU ARE A GO. ENGAGE TARGET.
BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA BRAKKA
AL DIVES FOR COVER.
CYAN, I NEED TO TRY SOMETHING. IF IT DOESN'T WORK, YOU NEED TO HIDE YOURSELF ONCE I DRAW THEM TOWARDS ME. CAN YOU DO THAT?
I... THINK SO.
SPAWN RACES TO ANOTHER CORNER, SHELTERING HIMSELF AS HE LETS LOOSE WITH AN UNRELENTING STREAM OF BULLETS, WHICH HE HOPES WILL FORCE THE HELICOPTER TO ABANDON ITS MISSION.
TAKK

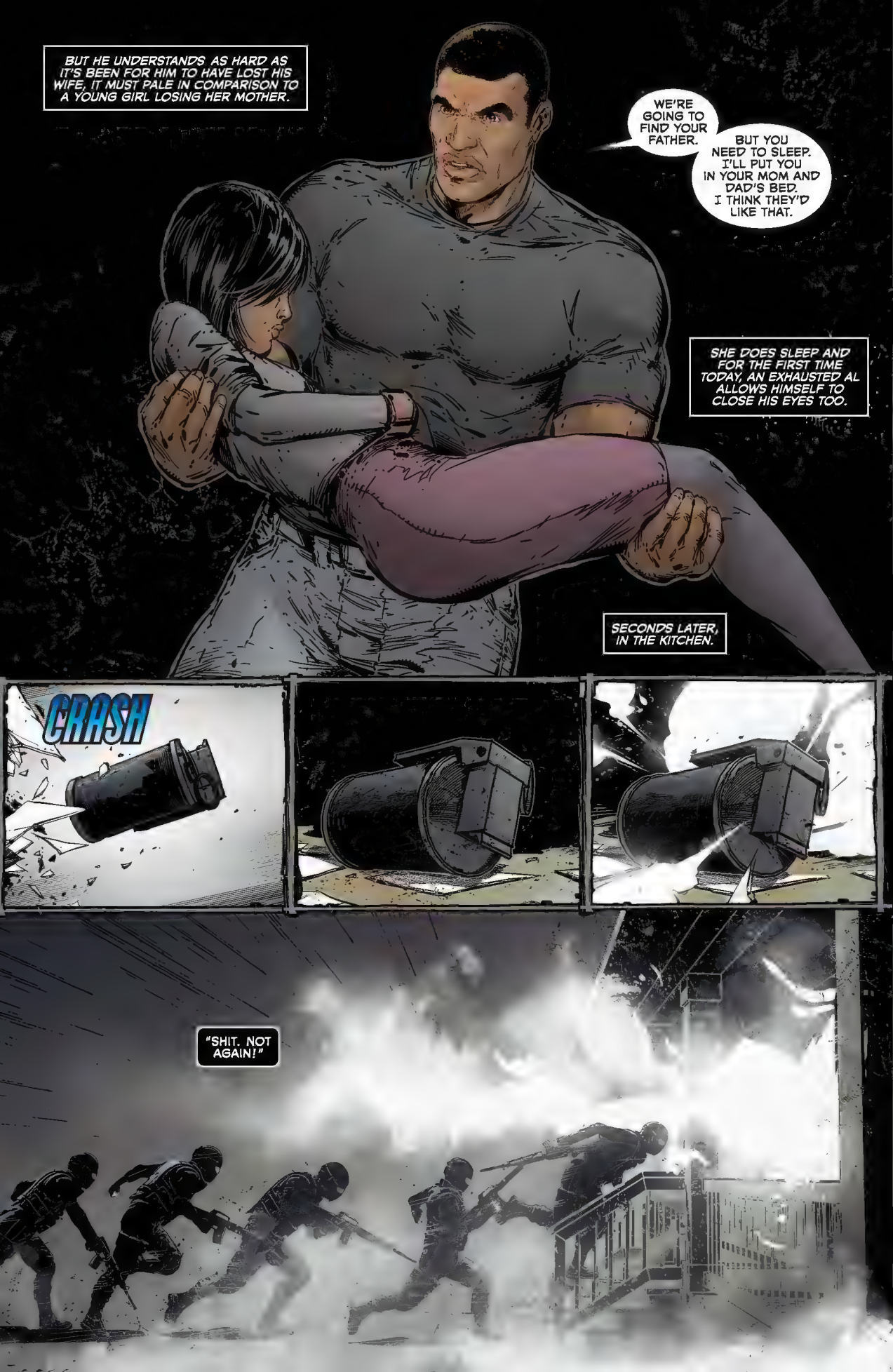
POLICE
THE RESULT IS FAR GREATER THAN HE COULD HAVE IMAGINED.

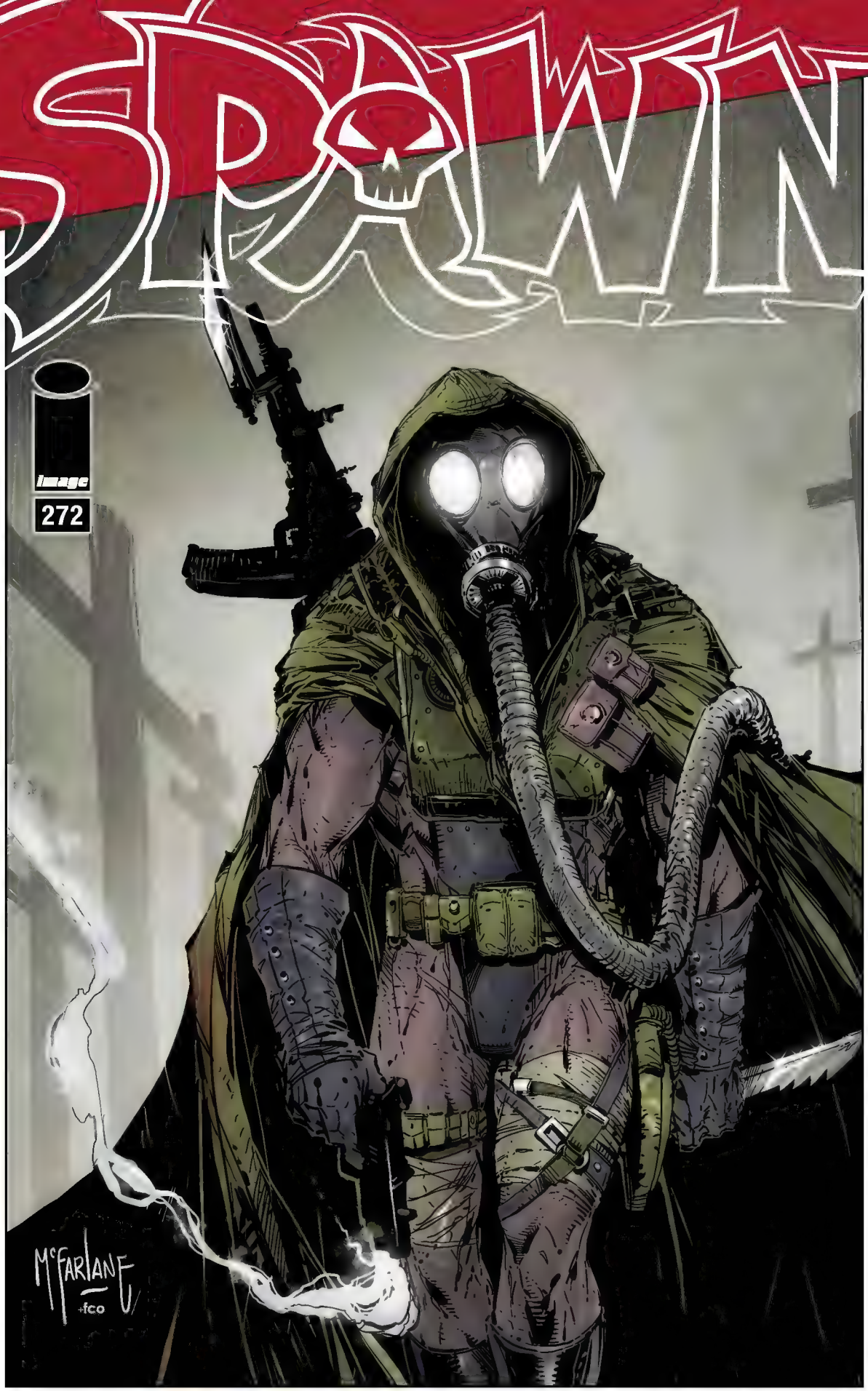
THE ROOFTOP DOORS BURST OPEN AS MORE S.W.A.T. POLICE CONTINUE THEIR ASSAULT.
OUT OF AMMUNITION AND OUT OF OPTIONS, HE HAS BUT ONE CHOICE: TO FIGHT WITH ALL THE SKILL AND ANGER HE CAN COMBINE.
SWAT
BECAUSE HE'LL DIE FIRST BEFORE HE LETS THEM TOUCH CYAN.

WITH HIS ASSAILANTS DISPOSED OF, SPAWN RUSHES TO THE TEENAGE GIRL HE'S SWORN TO PROTECT. HE'S HOPING SHE HASN'T BEEN CAUGHT IN ANY OF THE HELICOPTER'S FLYING DEBRIS.
PHYSICALLY SHE'S UNINJURED, BUT WHEN HE CRADLES HER SHE FAINTS. FOR A MOMENT, SHE APPEARS TO BE LIFELESS.
THEN SUDDENLY HER BODY CONVULSES. VIOLENTLY. AND HER EYES ROLL DEEP INTO THE BACK OF HER HEAD.
CYAN?!
BELOW, EVERYONE ON THE STREET SEES A GIANT FIREBALL. THEY ASSUME IT IS MORE AFTEREFFECT OF THE HELICOPTER CRASH.
TEN MINUTES FROM NOW THEY'LL FIND OUT HOW VERY WRONG THEY ALL WERE.

THE FITZGERALD HOME.
HOW DOES SHE KEEP DOING THIS?
"AND WHAT IS HER CONNECTION TO MY COSTUME?" HE ASKS HIMSELF.
BECAUSE THE PAIN PIERCING THROUGH HIS BODY IS ONE HE HASN'T FELT BEFORE.
IT'S NOT MY PAIN...
...IT'S... HERS.
CYAN MOANS AS SHE ATTEMPTS TO LIMIT HER INTERNAL CRAMPING. WHILE AL, FOR HIS PART, SEARCHES FOR SOME QUICK SOLUTION.
C'MON, EARL. PICK UP. PICK UP!

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE.
THIS IS CHARLIE ALPHA TWO. I HAVE MOVEMENT INSIDE THE TARGET'S HOUSE.
NEGATIVE. NO ONE ENTERED FROM THE FRONT OR REAR. HOW DO YOU WANT ME TO PROCEED?
MINUTES LATER, HE FINDS MEDICINE THAT SHOULD HELP.
BEFORE HE GETS TO CYAN'S ROOM, HE'S EMOTIONALLY CAUGHT OFF GUARD BY A FEW IMAGES HE PASSES.


BUT HE UNDERSTANDS AS HARD AS IT'S BEEN FOR HIM TO HAVE LOST HIS WIFE, IT MUST PALE IN COMPARISON TO A YOUNG GIRL LOSING HER MOTHER.
WE'RE GOING TO FIND YOUR FATHER.
BUT YOU NEED TO SLEEP. I'LL PUT YOU IN YOUR MOM AND DAD'S BED. I THINK THEY'D LIKE THAT.
SHE DOES SLEEP AND FOR THE FIRST TIME TODAY, AN EXHAUSTED AL ALLOWS HIMSELF TO CLOSE HIS EYES TOO.
SECONDS LATER, IN THE KITCHEN.
CRASH
"SHIT. NOT AGAIN!"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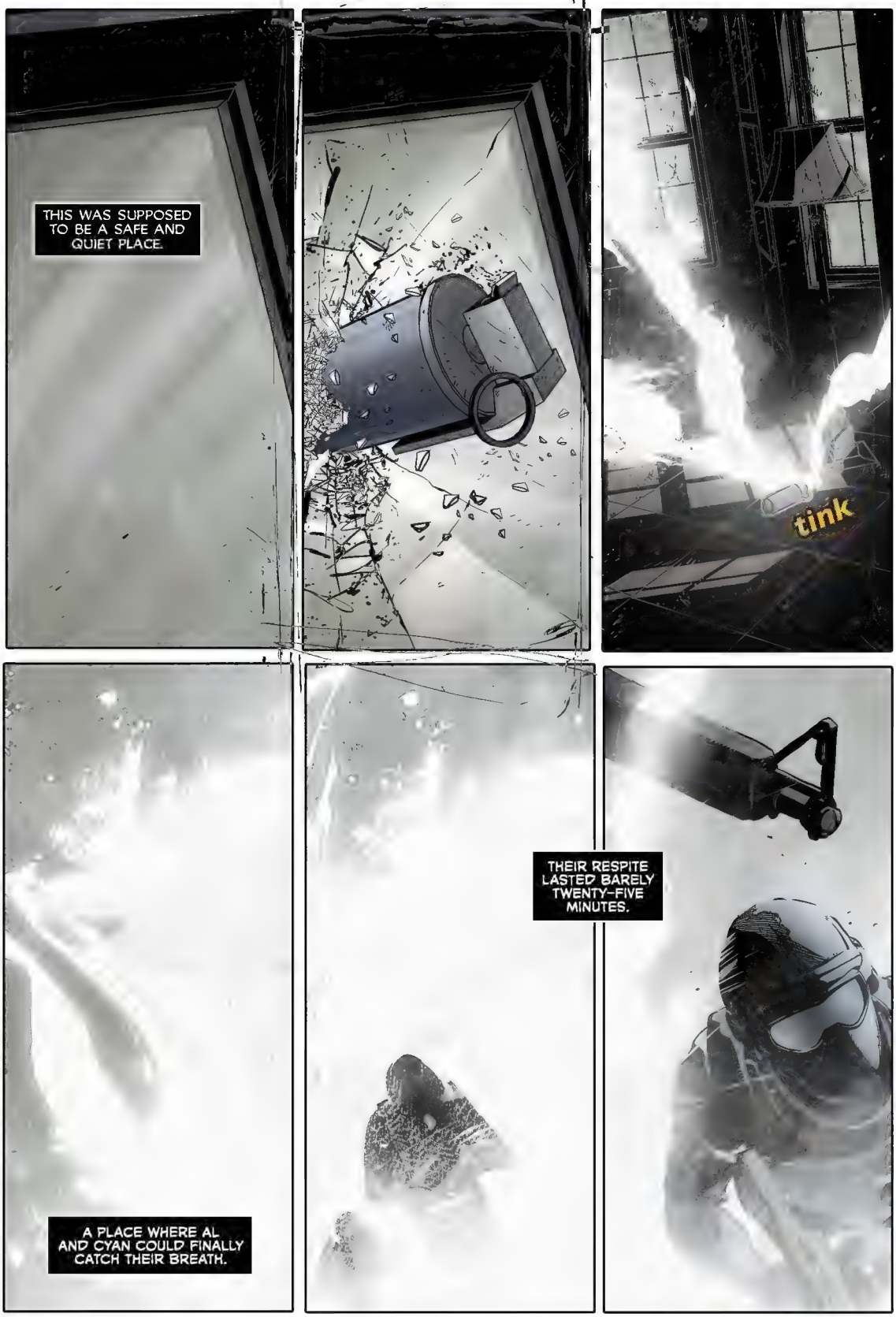
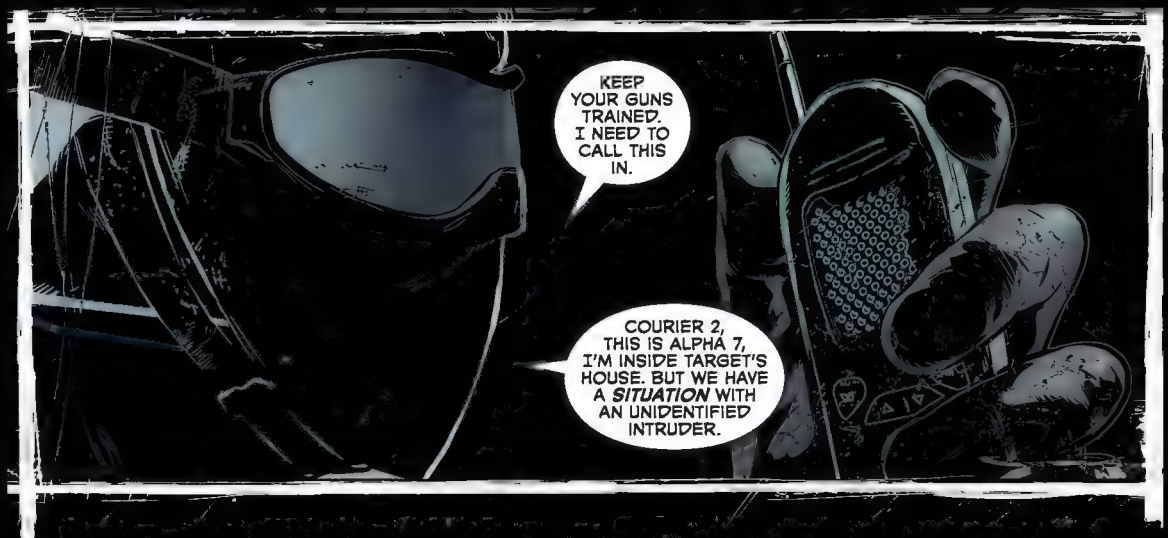

THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SAFE AND QUIET PLACE.
tink
A PLACE WHERE AL AND CYAN COULD FINALLY CATCH THEIR BREATH.
THEIR RESPITE LASTED BARELY TWENTY-FIVE MINUTES.

FREEZE!
DON'T MOVE A MUSCLE!
WINCING FROM THE BRIGHT LIGHT BLASTING IN HIS FACE, AL IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THE S.W.A.T. TEAM COULD HUNT HIM DOWN SO QUICKLY.*
*Last issue---Todd
WHAT HE HASN'T GRASPED YET IS THIS IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT GROUP. TAKING ORDERS FROM BOSSES THAT PREFER TO REMAIN AWAY FROM THE LIMELIGHT.
PUT YOUR HANDS BEHIND YOUR BACK.

YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE.
?
WHAT THE F*CK? WHERE'D YOU COME FROM?
SARGE... HE LOOKS *JUST LIKE* THE OTHER GUY. ARE THEY TWINS?
IT'S MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT.
ANOTHER ONE!?

LIKE I SAID, YOU'RE MAKING...

...A MISTAKE.
...A MISTAKE.
...A MISTAKE.
...A MISTAKE.
SARGE? WHAT'S GOING ON?


KEEP YOUR GUNS TRAINED. I NEED TO CALL THIS IN.
COURIER 2, THIS IS ALPHA 7, I'M INSIDE TARGET'S HOUSE. BUT WE HAVE A ***SITUATION*** WITH AN UNIDENTIFIED INTRUDER.

"ALPHA 7. WHAT KIND OF SITUATION?"
"I'VE GOT FOUR INTRUDERS, BUT THEY'RE ALL... I, IT'S SOMETHING I CAN'T EXPLAIN."
"THEN BRING THEM ALL IN."
BAP
AL BOLTS OUT A SIDE DOOR AND SO DO THE OTHER THREE 'CLONES.' EACH DARTING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.

TO THE AGENT SITTING IN HIS CAR OUT FRONT, HE CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT HE'S SEEING. HIS MEN SEEM TO BE CHASING AFTER... NOTHING!
AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT'S HAPPENING BECAUSE THREE OF THE FOUR AL SIMMONS ARE NOT REAL. THEY'RE ILLUSIONS ONLY THE MILITARY SEE. CREATED TO BE DISTRACTIONS SO THE REAL AL COULD HAVE A CHANCE TO ESCAPE.
JOHNSON! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOUR INTRUDER IS GETTING AWAY!
AT THAT MOMENT THE ILLUSIONS DISAPPEAR, AS THE FIELD SERGEANT QUICKLY TRIES TO EXPLAIN THINGS.
I DON'T GIVE A SHIT WHAT YOU THOUGHT.
WE NEED TO FIND THAT INTRUDER!

AL! OVER HERE!
CYAN? WHERE'D YOU DISAPPEAR TO? HOW'D YOU GET OUT OF THE HOUSE?
I JUST... I CAN DO THINGS. I DON'T KNOW HOW, I JUST CAN. BUT WE NEED TO HIDE NOW. WE'LL FIGURE EVERYTHING ELSE OUT LATER.
NOTHING BACK HERE, WE'RE GOING TO SEARCH SOME OF THE NEIGHBORS' YARDS.
LATER.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN THEY'RE GONE? WE HAVE CARS STATIONED AT EVERY EXIT POINT! AND A DOZEN MEN ON FOOT. THEY HAVE TO BE HERE! SOMEPLACE!
WE'VE ALREADY LOOKED.
THEN LOOK AGAIN!
THIS IS ABSURD!

SPREAD OUT. LET'S FAN THE WEST SIDE OF THIS BLOCK AGAIN.
WHEN IT APPEARS THEY'RE ALONE, CYAN LETS DOWN HER 'INVISIBLE CLOAK.'
THAT WAS AMAZING, CYAN.
THANKS.
THERE'S THINGS WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT.
BUT RIGHT NOW, WE HAVE TO FIND YOUR DAD. AND I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP FOR THAT.
"DID YOU EVER HEAR YOUR DAD TALK ABOUT ANY NAMES IN PARTICULAR?"
"MAYBE A COUPLE."
"GREAT. LET'S START THERE."
I UNDER-STAND, AL. I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN FIND OUT.
THANKS, EARL.

SOMEWHERE.

I'M NOT GOING TO FORGET WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO ME.
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SAY?
OH YEAH? AND WHAT DO YOU PLAN ON DOING ABOUT THAT?
HURT YOU.
HAHAHAHEEHAHA
YOU'RE GOING TO... HEE HEE... YOU KILL ME!
I GUESS YOU'RE TOO STUPID TO UNDERSTAND I'M ON THE BETTER SIDE OF THESE BARS. AND YOU, YOU'RE CORNERED.
BUT GO AHEAD AND SCARE ME WITH YOUR THREATS. I NEED A GOOD LAUGH.

KNOCK KNOCK
THE DOOR'S OPEN.
SO, HOW IS MR. FITZGERALD DOING TODAY? HOPEFULLY HE'S BEGINNING TO GET A SENSE OF THE SERIOUSNESS OF HIS CURRENT SITUATION AND HIS REFUSAL TO EAT ISN'T GOING TO GET HIM ANYWHERE. HE'LL ACCEPT HIS FATE SOON ENOUGH.
I THINK HE'S ALMOST THERE.
WHY'S THAT?
I JUST SAW THE LOOK IN HIS EYE A COUPLE OF MINUTES AGO. THAT'S A MAN READY TO BREAK. AND FOR THE FIRST TIME HE DIDN'T WHINE ABOUT GETTING BACK TO HIS FAMILY.
THAT'S PROGRESS. PERHAPS HE UNDERSTANDS HE MIGHT ACTUALLY GET TO SEE HIS FAMILY IF HE GIVES US THE INFORMATION WE'RE LOOKING FOR.
I'D SAY WE'RE ABOUT TWO DAYS AWAY FROM BREAKING HIM.
I THINK IT'S SOONER THAN THAT.
BRING
I NEED TO GET THIS. CHECK IN WITH ME TOMORROW.

COMMANDER SCARELLI. WHILE WE WERE WATCHING THE FITZGERALD RESIDENCE A GROUP OF MILITARY AGENTS STORMED HIS HOUSE. THEY CHASED SOMEONE FROM THE BUILDING.
ON WHOSE ORDERS WERE THOSE MEN BROUGHT IN?
HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO ASCERTAIN THAT YET, BUT THEY WEREN'T ANY OF OURS. THAT MUCH IS CLEAR.
THEN FIND OUT WHO'S DOING THIS! AND I MEAN WITHIN THE HOUR. CHECK YOUR CHINESE AND RUSSIAN CONTACTS AND SEE WHO THE HELL ELSE HAS AN INTEREST IN OUR MATTERS! WE DON'T NEED THIS KIND OF ATTENTION. I'M ALREADY DEALING WITH MY CAPTURE'S MISSING DAUGHTER.
THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE UNDER THE RADAR.
THEN YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THAT THE ROGUE AGENTS TEAR GASSED THE PLACE BEFORE HAVING TO CONFRONT THE POLICE AND FIREFIGHTERS THE NEIGHBORS CALLED.
WHO WAS THE INVADER THAT DESERVED THAT KIND OF ATTENTION?
DON'T KNOW.
BUT IT APPEARS THEY GOT AWAY.
WHAT?
AFTER ALL THAT!?
THERE ARE JUST SOME DAYS WHEN IT DOESN'T PAY FOR AGENT SCARELLI TO GET OUT OF BED. TODAY WAS ONE OF THOSE.

BUT AT LEAST HE HAS THE LUXURY OF COMING HOME TO HIS TWO BOYS. THEY'VE BECOME THE JOY OF HIS LIFE SINCE HIS BRUTAL DIVORCE LAST YEAR.
DAD! YOU'RE HOME. WANNA PLAY PING PONG? CHRIS IS CHEATING.
YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS I'M BETTER THAN YOU.
SO, HOW WERE THEY TODAY?
THEY'RE ALWAYS GOOD MR. SCARELLI. I JUST WISH MINE WERE AS WELL BEHAVED. WHAT TIME DO YOU NEED ME TOMORROW?
AND MY MATH TEACHER THINKS I SHOULD TAKE ADVANCED ALGEBRA WHEN I GET TO HIGH SCHOOL.
I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, YOU'RE WAY SMARTER THAN YOUR OLD MAN.
WHAT'S THIS SHOW CALLED AGAIN?
GAME OF THRONES. WE'VE TOLD YOU A MILLION TIMES.
AND WHY DO WE LIKE IT SO MUCH?
COOL DRAGONS AND FIGHTING. AND THE NAKED LADIES.
DON'T TELL YOUR MOM I LET YOU WATCH THIS.
BILLY. HURRY UP WITH YOUR TEETH. IT'S GETTING LATE.
"AND THEN BEFORE THEY COULD REACH THE WATER WELL, MORE ZOMBIES CAME FROM THE DARK FOREST..."

2:36 A.M.
SCARELLI...
IT'S TIME.
JESUS!
TERRY FITZGERALD. SOMEONE IS GOING TO TELL ME WHERE HE IS.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE... WHO THE HELL ARE YOU!?
HE HAS CHILDREN. BUT YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT. YOU JUST DON'T CARE. SO WHY SHOULD I CARE ABOUT YOURS?
YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR KIDS AGAIN, YOU'LL MAKE A CALL.
THE FATHER RACES TO HIS CHILDREN'S ROOM, BUT HORRIFYINGLY FINDS BOTH BEDS EMPTY.
CHRIS?
BILLY?
THE ONLY THREE MORE WORDS ARE SPOKEN BY THE CLOAKED SENTINEL= "MAKE THE CALL."

Brrrrt
Enter
SCARELLI
THAT'S WEIRD.
HEY, BOSS? THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T WANT US COMMUNICATING ON THIS LINE?
WHAT? YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT?
NO. RELEASE FITZGERALD NOW.
DON'T TELL ANYONE YOU'RE DOING IT OR WHY. AND MAKE SURE NO ONE FOLLOWS HIM.
JUST MAKE HIM A FREE MAN. YOU'VE GOT TEN MINUTES. AND BERNIE...?
MAKE SURE YOU KISS YOUR WIFE AND KIDS TONIGHT.
KRAK
BECAUSE OF HIS BROKEN NOSE AND SHATTERED JAW, SCARELLI, FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, WILL HAVE TROUBLE BREATHING NORMALLY. AND HE'LL BE HAUNTED FROM THIS DAY FORWARD.

SPAWN STAYS IN SCARELLI'S HOUSE ANOTHER 40 MINUTES, WAITING FOR A CALL FROM TERRY HIMSELF CONFIRMING HIS RELEASE.
AND WHEN HE FINALLY DOES WAKE UP, SCARELLI'S CHILDREN WILL TELL HIM THAT THEY NEVER LEFT THEIR BEDS. BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T.
THE WHOLE TIME CYAN HAD CREATED THE ILLUSION THEY WERE GONE, WHEN IN REALITY THEY SLEPT COMFORTABLY THE ENTIRE NIGHT.
YOU DID GOOD AGAIN, CYAN.
CAN WE GO HOME NOW?
SOON. I'M WAITING FOR SOMETHING.
THEN IT COMES.
YES. SHE'S HERE.
HI... DADDY.
IT'S ME, CYAN.
YAH, I'M OKAY. DON'T WORRY.
DADDY?
I...
I'VE MISSED YOU.

UPPER NEW YORK.
RUFUS!
BARK BARK BARK
EASY, BUD! THERE'S NO ONE THERE.
WOOF WOOF BARK WOOF BARK
GRRRR
OH, MY GOD! WHY CAN'T YOU JUST RELAX? NO ONE'S COMING!
SEE!
WHAT'D I TELL YOU.
YOU'RE EXHAUSTING SOMETIMES.

ONCE AGAIN IMMERSED IN THE VIDEO GAME HE'S PLAYING, ANDY MAITLIN DOESN'T NOTICE THE SLOW-MOVING FOG CRAWLING ALONG THE FLOOR.
AND IT'LL BE TOO LATE WHEN HE FINALLY DOES.
AS HIS LUNGS BEGIN TO COLLAPSE AND BURN FROM THE INSIDE.

IN SIMPLE TERMS, HIS 'SOUL IS BEING CRUSHED.'
GRRRR
BARK BARK BARK
WOOF WOOF
SNAP!

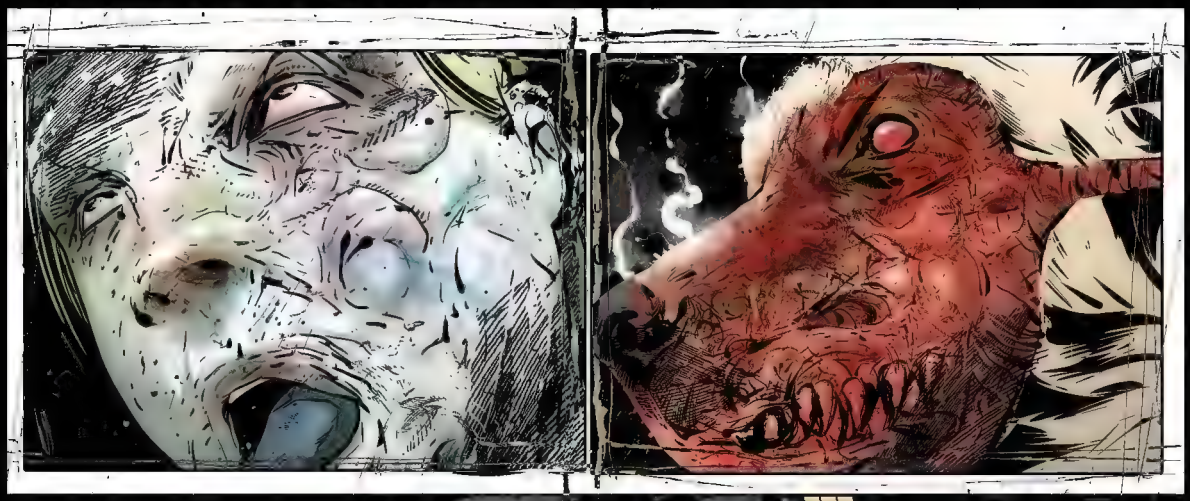
ANDY? YOU HOME?

SPAWN
image
273

SO, NOW IT'S COME TO THIS?
IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR A CROOK TO COME IN AND STEAL OR BEAT THEIR VICTIMS. THEY NEED TO POISON THEM WHILE THEY'RE AT IT. I SWEAR THE INTERNET IS GIVING THESE PSYCHOS OUT THERE WAY TOO MANY IDEAS.
DO WE KNOW WHAT KILLED HIM, YET?
POLICE
SOME TYPE OF GAS. WE'VE SENT A SAMPLE OUT TO THE LAB ALREADY. BUT AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL, THERE'S NO OTHER MARKS ON HIM. NO SIGNS OF A STRUGGLE OR A FIGHT.
WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THE MASK?

CLICK
SOME KIND OF TOKEN TO LET US ALL KNOW HOW SPECIAL THE KILLER IS. THE REAL SADISTIC ONES GET A KICK OUT OF LEAVING VISUAL HINTS BEHIND.

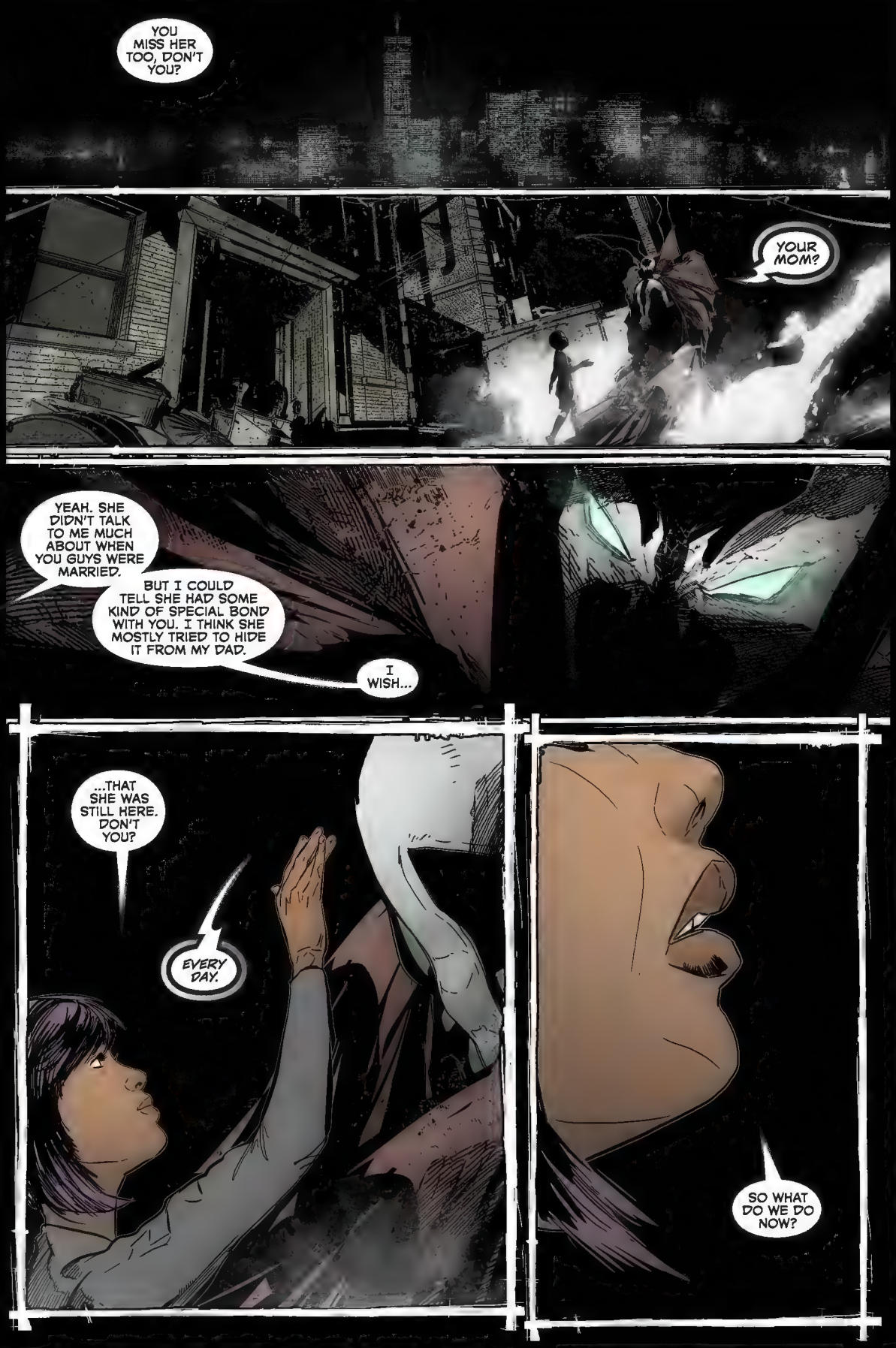
MAKES THEM BELIEVE THEY'RE SOME KIND OF GENIUS CRIMINAL MIND. AND THEY WANT US TO ALL BE IMPRESSED. BECAUSE OF COURSE, WE ALL NEED MORE DEAD DOGS WITH MASKS OVER THEIR FACE.
CLICK CLICK
LET'S GET A FEW PICS WITHOUT THE MASKS.
POLICE DEPARTMENT
NONE OF THE THREE MEN CAN FIND WORDS FOR WHAT THEY NOW SEE IN FRONT OF THEM.



THEY'D THOUGHT THE VICTIMS ONLY HAD INTERIOR TRAUMA TO THEIR LUNGS. OBVIOUSLY, THEY ASSUMED WRONG.
HEY, TWITCH. SAM. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE WHAT'S INSIDE THE HOUSE.
UM... YOU'RE JUST GOING TO HAVE TO SEE FOR YOURSELF.
THAT BAD?
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS

DO WE HAVE AN I.D. ON THE VICTIMS YET?
YEAH. A KID BY THE NAME OF ANDY MAITLIN. AGE TWENTY-TWO. THE OTHER DECEASED WAS HIS DOG. WE'VE GOT THE FATHER WAITING FOR YOU INSIDE.
DO ME A FAVOR AND MAKE SURE YOU WEAR GLOVES IF YOU NEED TO TOUCH ANYTHING.
OF COURSE.

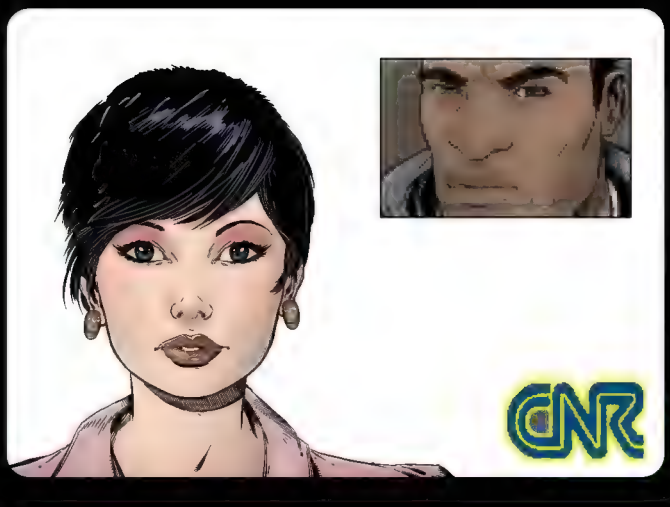
HEY, DETECTIVES. HEARD YOU GOT TAGGED WITH THIS ONE. IT'S A BEAUTY. JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT THE CRAZIES COULDN'T GET ANY CRAZIER THEY RAISE THE BAR.
MIND IF I TAKE A LOOK?
HELP YOURSELF.
MAITLIN? I KNEW THAT NAME WAS FAMILIAR.
HE'S SOME KIND OF BIG SHOT INVESTOR OR STOCK HOLDER FOR SOME BIOCHEMICAL COMPANY, I THINK.
MR. MAITLIN? DO YOU MIND IF WE ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS BEFORE YOU HEAD TO THE CORONER'S?
DID YOU SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO MY BOY?
WE DID.
WHAT KIND OF PERSON DOES SOMETHING LIKE THAT?
WE DON'T KNOW. BUT OUR JOB IS TO FIND YOU THAT ANSWER.


YOU MISS HER TOO, DON'T YOU?
YOUR MOM?
YEAH. SHE DIDN'T TALK TO ME MUCH ABOUT WHEN YOU GUYS WERE MARRIED.
BUT I COULD TELL SHE HAD SOME KIND OF SPECIAL BOND WITH YOU. I THINK SHE MOSTLY TRIED TO HIDE IT FROM MY DAD.
I WISH...
...THAT SHE WAS STILL HERE. DON'T YOU?
EVERY DAY.
SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

I DON'T KNOW WHERE MY DAD IS.
I'M WORKING ON THAT.
I KNOW WHAT YOU MUST THINK OF ME. ABOUT HOW STUPID I'VE BEEN TAKING DRUGS AND STUFF, BUT WANDA WASN'T JUST YOUR WIFE. SHE WAS MY MOM TOO. AND I HATED MYSELF FOR ARGUING WITH HER ALL THE TIME AND NOW THAT SHE'S GONE, ALL I THINK OF IS THE TIME I WASTED NOT WANTING TO BE AROUND HER.
MAYBE THAT'S WHY SHE ISN'T HERE. SHE WAS MAD AT ME. AND IT MADE HER CRASH.
YOU'RE NOT TO BLAME FOR HER DEATH.
THAT'S WHAT EVERYONE SAYS. I DON'T BELIEVE IT. THAT'S WHY I DO THE DRUGS... TO HELP NUMB THINGS.
CYAN, I HAVE TO ASK...HOW DID YOU DO THAT INVISIBLE TRICK?
I DON'T KNOW. IT JUST HAPPENS. MOST TIMES I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER DOING ANYTHING.
HOW LONG'S THAT BEEN GOING ON?
A WHILE. SOMETIMES IT'S JUST WEIRD STUFF. LIKE THIS.

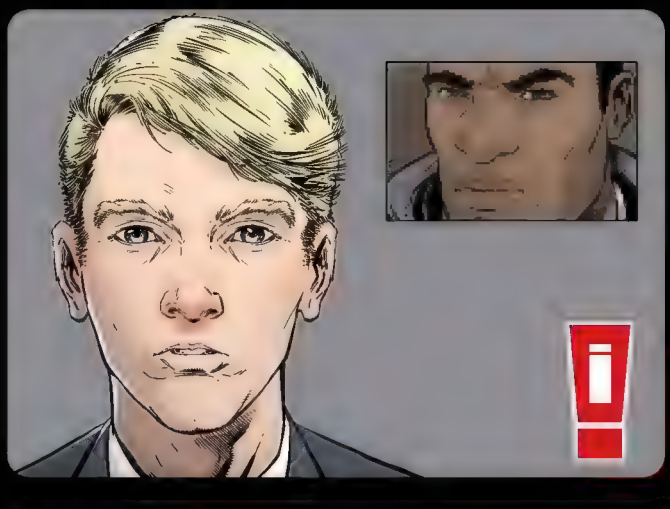
IT'S LIKE YOUR COSTUME IS AFRAID. BUT WHY? I'M NOT TRYING TO...
SOMEONE'S COMING!
DAD?!
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? I DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE. NONE OF US DID.
I KNOW. I'M SORRY, BABY.

I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE FOR YOU. YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ALONE.
I WASN'T ALONE. AL WAS WITH ME.
YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT EVEN HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON BECAUSE THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE THAT'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET WHAT THEY WANT. I GOT LUCKY EARL WAS THERE WHEN I WAS FINALLY FREED.
I TOLD YOU, I WAS JUST DOING WHAT AL TOLD ME TO DO.
I APPRECIATE WHAT YOU'VE DONE AGAIN.
AT SOME POINT REAL SOON, YOU AND I ARE GOING TO HAVE TO HAVE A CONVERSATION ABOUT WHY YOU DO ANY OF THIS.
I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU GOT ME OUT OF THERE, AL, BUT THANK YOU.
CYAN PLAYED A PART. YOU SHOULD BE THANKING HER.
IS THIS TRUE, CYAN?
DAD, I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT. I'M JUST GLAD YOU'RE HERE.
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO TELL THE FEDS AND THE POLICE WHEN THEY ASK HOW CYAN CAME BACK? YOU WERE WITH HER WHEN SHE DISAPPEARED, SO THEY'LL ASK ABOUT YOU.
TELL 'EM WHATEVER YOU HAVE TO. AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. YOU JUST TAKE CARE OF YOUR FAMILY. I'LL DEAL WITH THE FALLOUT LATER.



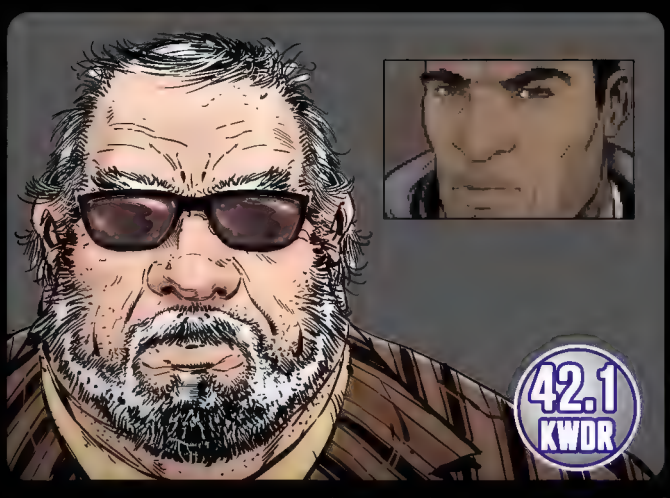
LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND STATE OFFICIALS ARE STILL UNSURE OF EXACTLY HOW THE YOUNG GIRL RETURNED. IT HAD BEEN JUST OVER TWO DAYS SINCE SHE VANISHED FROM AN ADOLESCENT CARE FACILITY. AS WE'VE BEEN REPORTING, SHE WAS IN THE COMPANY OF A FAMILY FRIEND WHEN IT HAPPENED.

THE GIRL'S FATHER TOLD THE POLICE HE DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HIS FRIEND IS. INSIDERS SAY THAT A "MANHUNT" HAS BEGUN TO FIND THIS MYSTERIOUS MAN WHO WAS CAUGHT ON ONE OF THE HOSPITAL CAMERAS. UNFORTUNATELY, THE QUALITY OF THE IMAGE IS POOR, SO IF ANYONE OUT THERE HAS ANY INFORMATION...



...PLEASE CALL THE POLICE. WE HAVE A HOTLINE NUMBER THAT HAS BEEN SET UP TO FIELD ANY PERTINENT INFORMATION THAT MIGHT LEAD TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF THIS MAN. POLICE ARE BEING CAREFUL NOT TO SAY HE WAS INVOLVED IN ANY WAY WITH WHAT HAPPENED. THEY ARE MERELY LOOKING TO QUESTION THIS INDIVIDUAL. FOR NOW, THEY DON'T KNOW IF THIS MAN WAS PART OF A CRIME OR WAS HE ABDUCTED UNWILLINGLY.

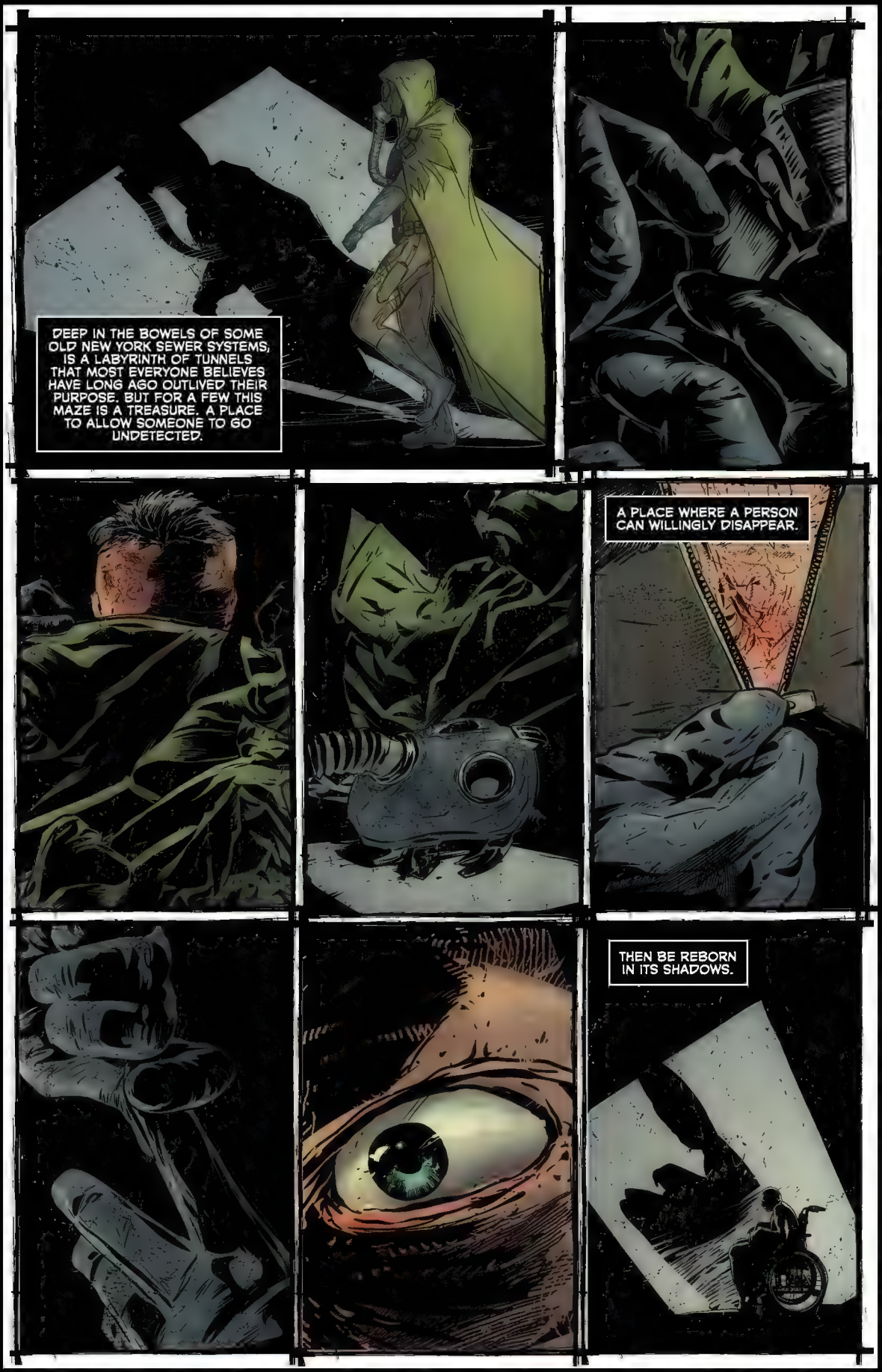
THE YOUNG GIRL TOLD POLICE SHE DOESN'T REMEMBER HOW SHE GOT OUT OF THE ROOM SHE WAS STAYING IN OR WHERE THIS MR. SMITH HAS GONE TO. DOCTORS ARE SAYING THIS TYPE OF MEMORY LOSS IS TYPICAL IN PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD BOUTS WITH DEPRESSION OR DRUGS. LUCKILY, WE CAN REPORT THAT THE YOUNG LADY IS HEALTHY AND UNHARMED PHYSICALLY.

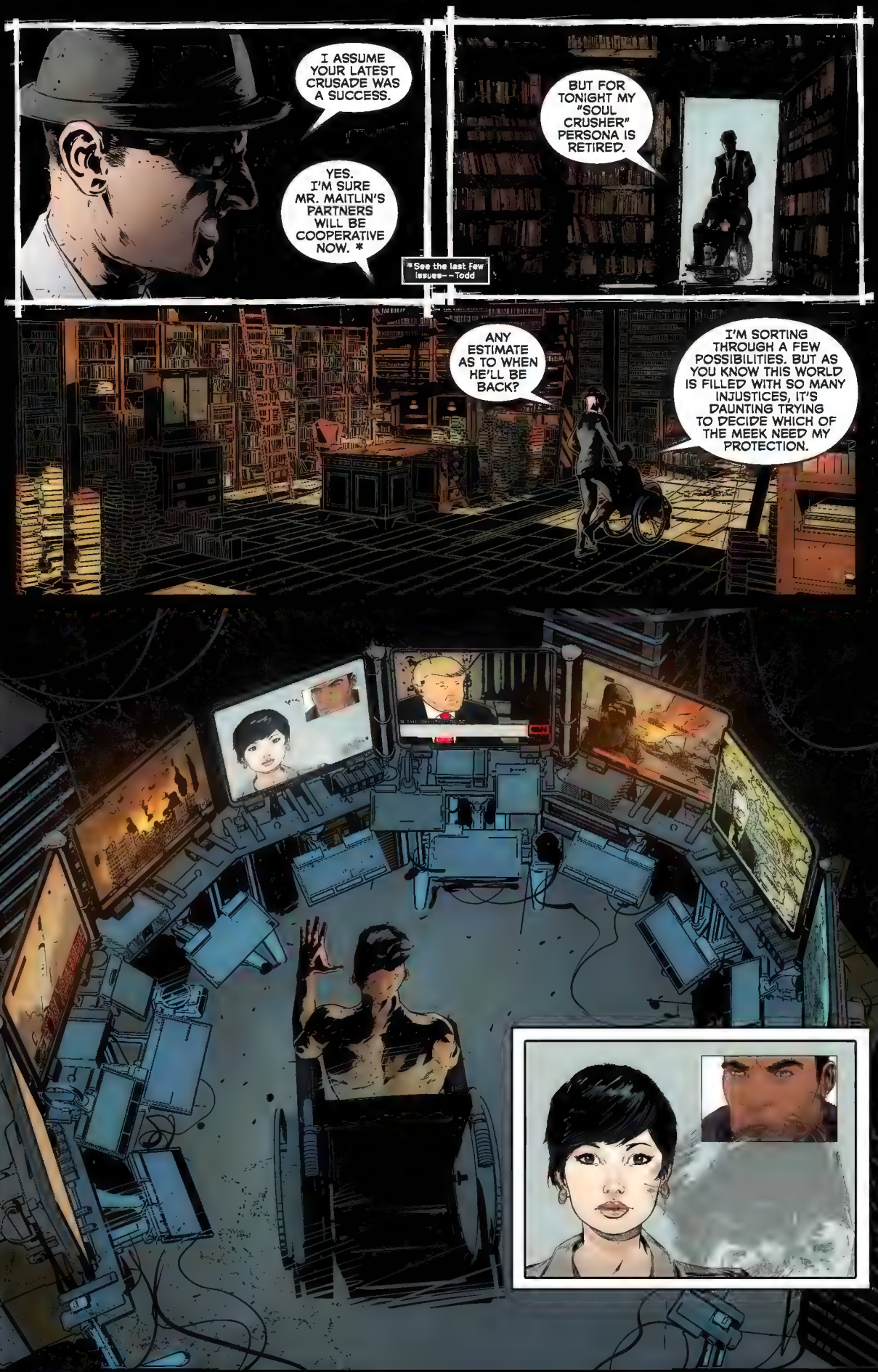


IS IT ME!? OR DOES ***ALL THIS*** STINK TO HIGH HEAVEN? THE HOSPITAL ***DOESN'T KNOW*** ANYTHING. THE FATHER ***CAN'T REMEMBER*** WHY HIS FRIEND WAS THERE VISITING HIS DAUGHTER AND THE DAUGHTER HERSELF SAYS SHE CAN'T RECALL ANY DETAILS!

WOW! AT LEAST A FEW PEOPLE WHO SUPPORTED OUR PRESIDENT'S CALL FOR MORE ***"LAW AND ORDER"*** HAVE SUPPOSEDLY ASSEMBLED A TEAM TO HUNT THIS MAN IN THE BLURRY PHOTO AND BRING HIM TO JUSTICE BEFORE HE TRIES TO MOLEST ANY OTHER INNOCENT, GOD-FEARING CHILDREN OUT THERE.

BUT!... I HAVE A ***BETTER*** SOLUTION. INSTEAD OF CALLING THE POLICE, GET A FEW OF YOUR HUSBANDS TO CIRCLE THE GUY AND MAKE HIM WISH HE NEVER MESSED WITH A CHILD EVER AGAIN. HELL, CALL ME FIRST. I'LL COME HELP YOU!

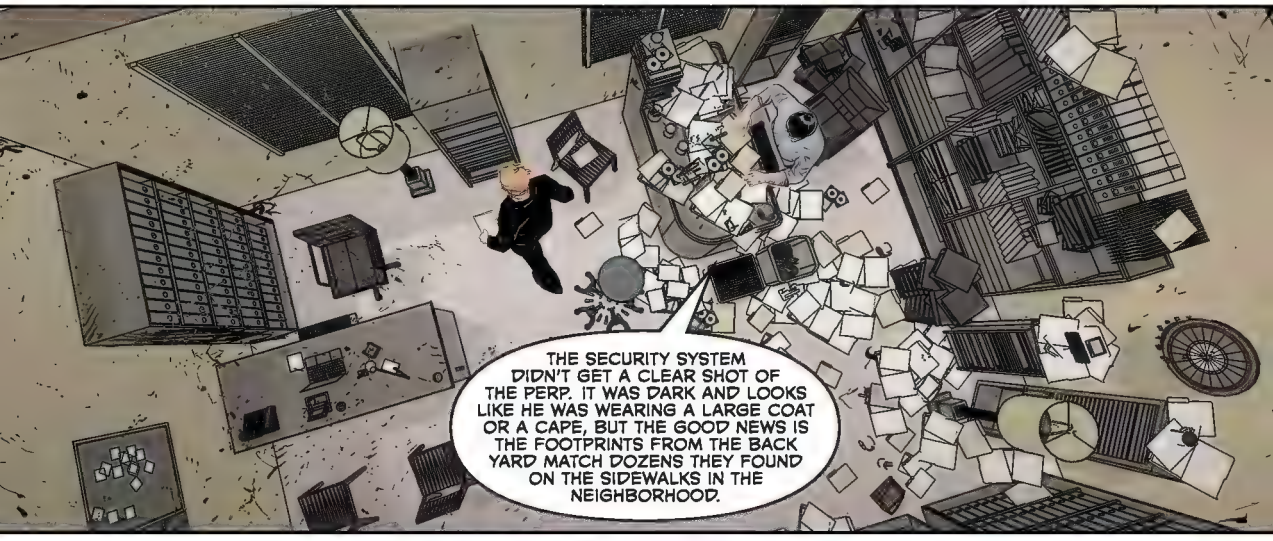

DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF SOME OLD NEW YORK SEWER SYSTEMS, IS A LABYRINTH OF TUNNELS THAT MOST EVERYONE BELIEVES HAVE LONG AGO OUTLIVED THEIR PURPOSE. BUT FOR A FEW THIS MAZE IS A TREASURE. A PLACE TO ALLOW SOMEONE TO GO UNDETECTED.
A PLACE WHERE A PERSON CAN WILLINGLY DISAPPEAR.
THEN BE REBORN IN ITS SHADOWS.

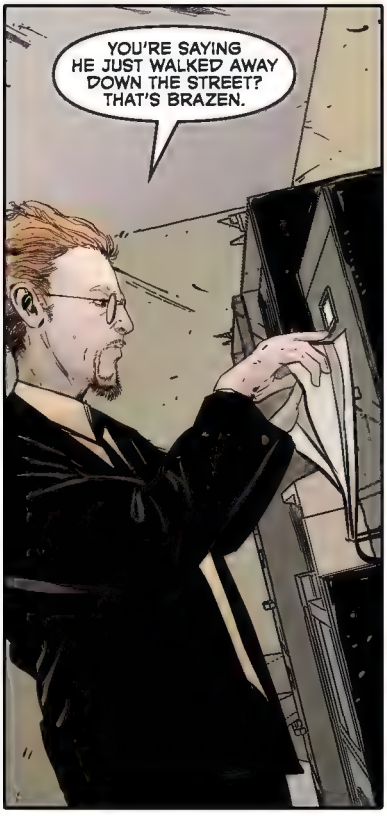

I ASSUME YOUR LATEST CRUSADE WAS A SUCCESS.
YES. I'M SURE MR. MAITLIN'S PARTNERS WILL BE COOPERATIVE NOW. *
*See the last few issues--Todd
BUT FOR TONIGHT MY "SOUL CRUSHER" PERSONA IS RETIRED.
ANY ESTIMATE AS TO WHEN HE'LL BE BACK?
I'M SORTING THROUGH A FEW POSSIBILITIES. BUT AS YOU KNOW THIS WORLD IS FILLED WITH SO MANY INJUSTICES, IT'S DAUNTING TRYING TO DECIDE WHICH OF THE MEEK NEED MY PROTECTION.
CNN

AND YOU'RE POSITIVE WE WON'T BE ABLE TO GET A BETTER VISUAL THAN THAT?
OKAY. THANKS FOR TRYING ANYWAY. LET ME KNOW IF YOU COME UP WITH ANYTHING ELSE. I'LL CALL YOU AGAIN TOMORROW. IN THE MEANTIME, DID THOSE SHOE PRINTS WE TOOK FROM THE BACK YARD NARROW YOUR SEARCH?
ASK THEM IF THEY THINK IT'S A FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC BRAND?
DID YOU HEAR MY PARTNER? WHAT'S THAT? YEAH, I'LL HOLD.
THEY JUST DELIVERED THE BACKGROUND ON THE OLDER MAITLIN. SOME OF HIS BUSINESS PARTNERS HAVE BEEN LESS THAN MODEL CITIZENS.
YOU DON'T THINK ONE OF THEM DID IT?
NO. BUT ONE OF THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS DISAPPEARED YEARS AGO OFF THE COAST OF SPAIN. THE NEXT WEEK THEIR STOCK PRICE DROPPED TWENTY PERCENT.
SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS, GIVEN WE BOTH THINK HE WAS LYING ABOUT NOT HAVING ANY ENEMIES?

HANG ON, TWITCH I HAVE THEM BACK ON THE PHONE. SO, WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT?
REALLY? ALRIGHT THANKS.

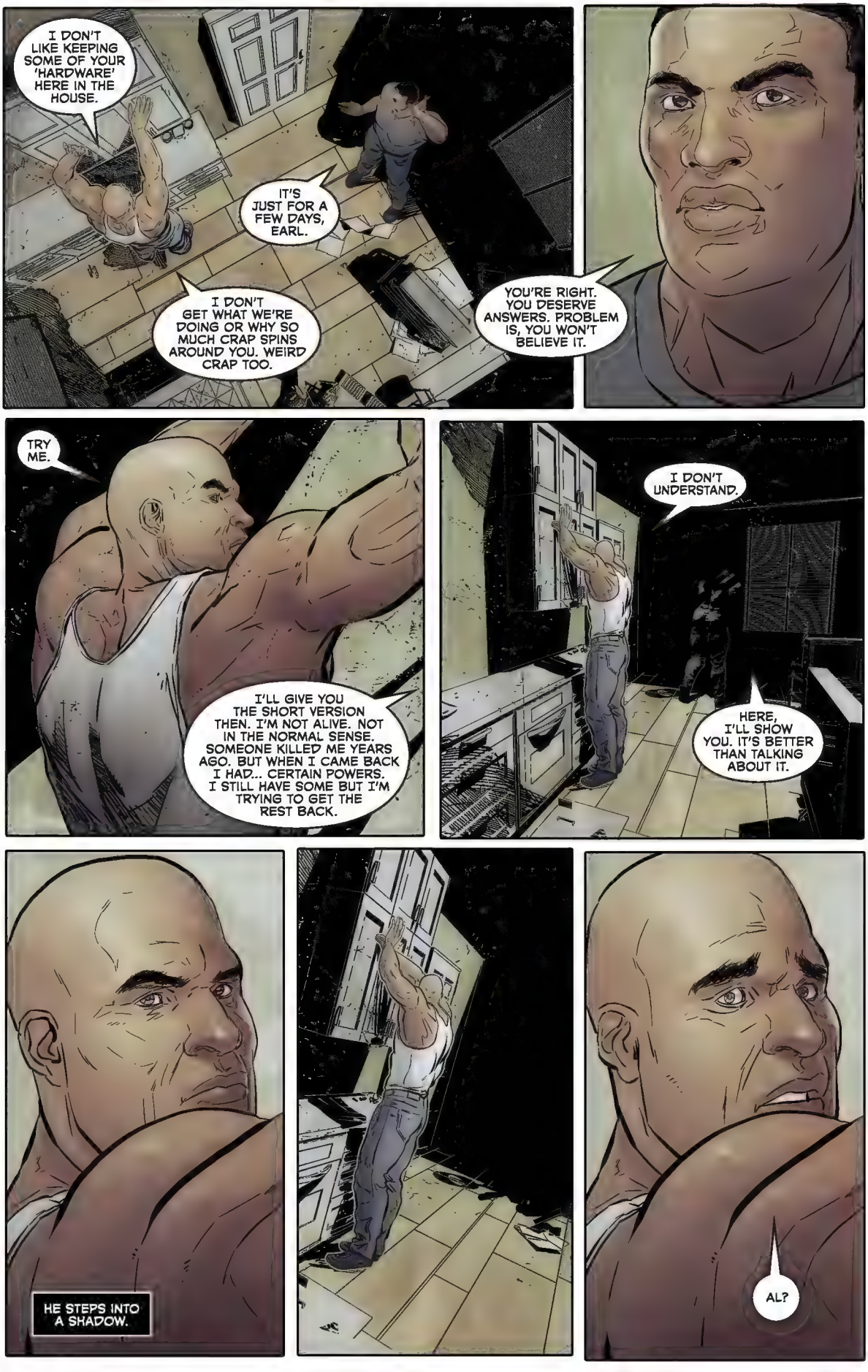
WE'VE GOT GOOD NEWS AND BAD.


THE SECURITY SYSTEM DIDN'T GET A CLEAR SHOT OF THE PERP. IT WAS DARK AND LOOKS LIKE HE WAS WEARING A LARGE COAT OR A CAPE, BUT THE GOOD NEWS IS THE FOOTPRINTS FROM THE BACK YARD MATCH DOZENS THEY FOUND ON THE SIDEWALKS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.


YOU'RE SAYING HE JUST WALKED AWAY DOWN THE STREET? THAT'S BRAZEN.

APPEARS SO. YOU FIND ANYTHING ELSE?

NOT A DIRECT MATCH BUT IT'S WORLD WAR I VINTAGE FOR SURE. I WANT TO FIND OUT IF IT HAS SOME SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE.


I DON'T LIKE KEEPING SOME OF YOUR 'HARDWARE' HERE IN THE HOUSE.
IT'S JUST FOR A FEW DAYS, EARL.
I DON'T GET WHAT WE'RE DOING OR WHY SO MUCH CRAP SPINS AROUND YOU. WEIRD CRAP TOO.
YOU'RE RIGHT. YOU DESERVE ANSWERS. PROBLEM IS, YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT.
TRY ME.
I'LL GIVE YOU THE SHORT VERSION THEN. I'M NOT ALIVE. NOT IN THE NORMAL SENSE. SOMEONE KILLED ME YEARS AGO. BUT WHEN I CAME BACK I HAD... CERTAIN POWERS. I STILL HAVE SOME BUT I'M TRYING TO GET THE REST BACK.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
HERE, I'LL SHOW YOU. IT'S BETTER THAN TALKING ABOUT IT.
HE STEPS INTO A SHADOW.
AL?

AL..!?
WHERE THE HELL DID YOU GO?
TAP
?
BEHIND YOU.
I CAN TRAVEL THROUGH SHADOWS. ANYWHERE THERE IS SOME PLACE DARK.
HOW?
I TOLD YOU. YOU HAVE TO DIE FIRST.

JUDITH! GET YOUR ASS IN HERE!
HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU I DON'T WANT A BUNCH OF ICE CUBES IN MY DRINK?
YOU SAID YOU WANTED IT COLD.
I DO! BUT THIS TASTES LIKE F*CKING WATER NOW.
SO, TAKE THIS SHIT OUT OF MY FACE AND BRING ME ANOTHER ONE. BUT DO IT RIGHT THIS TIME.
I WAS TRYING TO DO IT RIGHT.
ARE YOU TALKING BACK TO ME, BITCH!? I DIDN'T ASK YOU YOUR OPINION--I GAVE YOU AN ORDER! I'LL CUT YOUR DAMN TONGUE OUT IF YOU SPEAK TO ME LIKE THAT AGAIN.
BERNIE, STOP!

YOU HEARD THE LADY.
WHO THE F*CK ARE YOU?
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM? WHO I KNOW? YOU'RE MESSING WITH THE WRONG GUY RIGHT NOW.
SO, TAKE YOUR FAGGY LITTLE COSTUME AND GET THE HELL OUT OF MY HOUSE!
NOT 'TIL I DELIVER MY MESSAGE.
YEAH? AND WHAT MESSAGE IS THAT?
BLAM

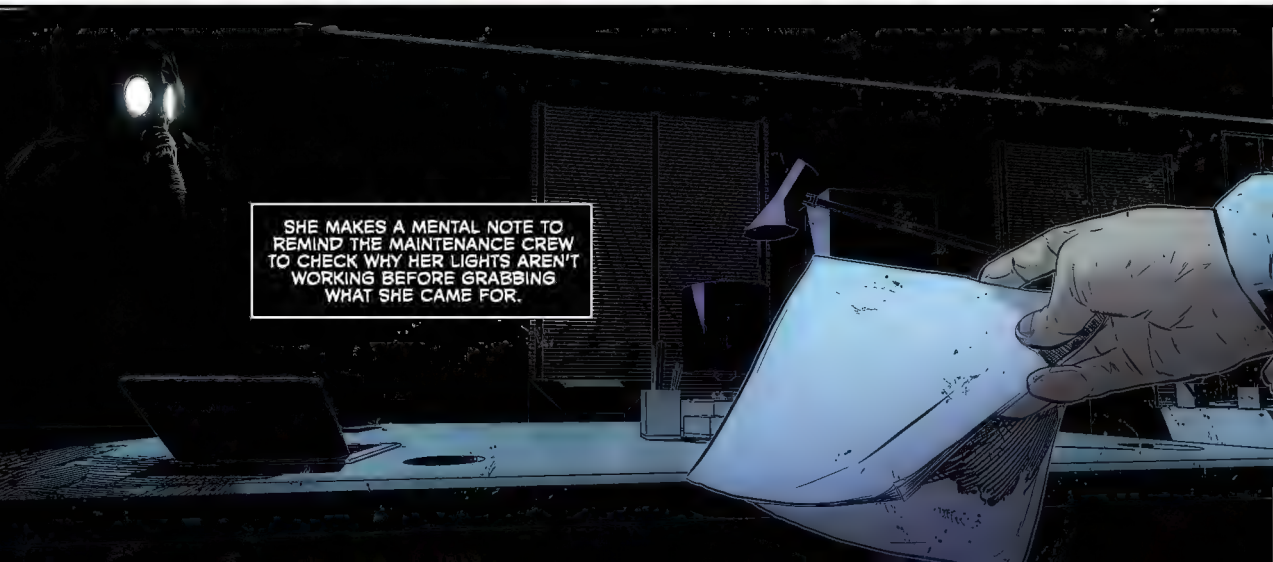
OH MY GOD! HELP!
I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE. SO, STOP YOUR BAD ACTING! YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN HE WAS.
PRETENDING TO BE HUMAN, HOPING THAT WOULD HIDE YOU FROM ME. BUT I CAN SMELL YOU.
YOU'RE GOING TO DELIVER A MESSAGE FOR ME.
TELL YOUR KIND THAT IF ANY OF THEM TOUCHES THE GIRL I'M PROTECTING, I'LL HUNT DOWN EVERY SINGLE ONE OF YOU AND KILL YOU ALL. AND I PRAY ONE OF YOURS DOESN'T BELIEVE ME. BECAUSE I'D LOVE TO BUTCHER ALL OF YOU SOONER THAN LATER!

AT THE INSTITUTION WHERE CYAN WAS BEING TREATED BEFORE HER INEXPLICABLE DISAPPEARANCE A FEW DAYS AGO, THE STAFF IS TRYING TO GET BACK INTO A NORMAL ROUTINE. THE PAST 48 HOURS THEY HAVE ALL HAD TO DEAL WITH POLICE AND FEDERAL AGENTS.
BUT WITH THE GOOD NEWS THAT CYAN FITZGERALD HAS BEEN FOUND AND IS BACK WITH HER FATHER, THE DOCTORS AND NURSES HERE CAN TURN THEIR FOCUS TO THEIR OTHER PATIENTS.

GOOD NIGHT LADIES. THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HELP TODAY. YOU BOTH WERE LIFE SAVERS.
DID YOU GET THE FINAL REPORT I PUT ON YOUR OFFICE DESK?

I KNEW I'D FORGOT SOMETHING.

KLIK
KLIK
THAT'S STRANGE.


SHE MAKES A MENTAL NOTE TO REMIND THE MAINTENANCE CREW TO CHECK WHY HER LIGHTS AREN'T WORKING BEFORE GRABBING WHAT SHE CAME FOR.

THE GIRL FROM THE NEWS. THE ONE THAT WAS KIDNAPPED. I NEED TO KNOW EVERY-THING ABOUT HER.
I THINK SHE MAY BE IN DANGER!
TO BE CONTINUED

SPAWN
ASHLEY WOOD 2016 + FCO
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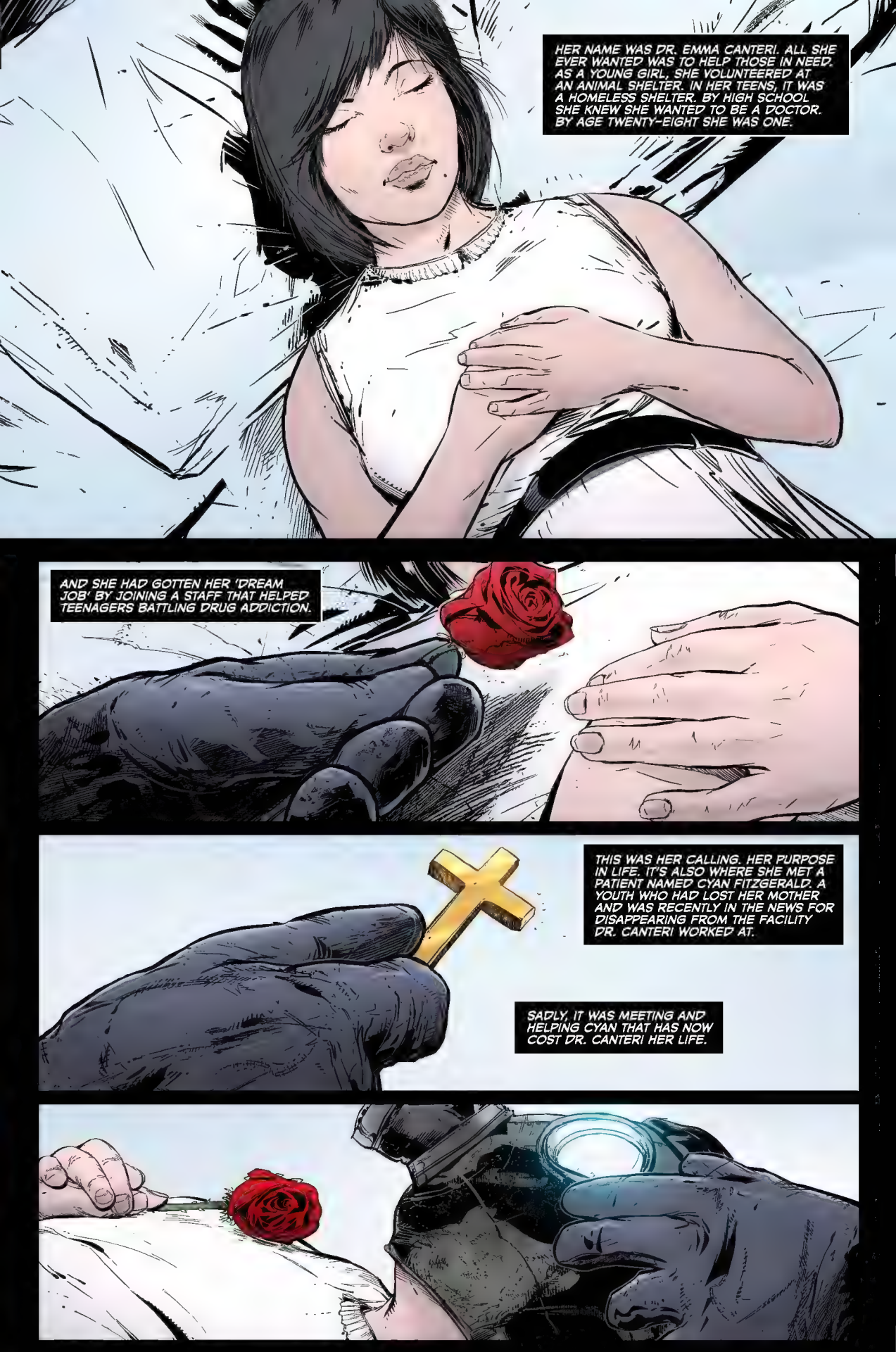
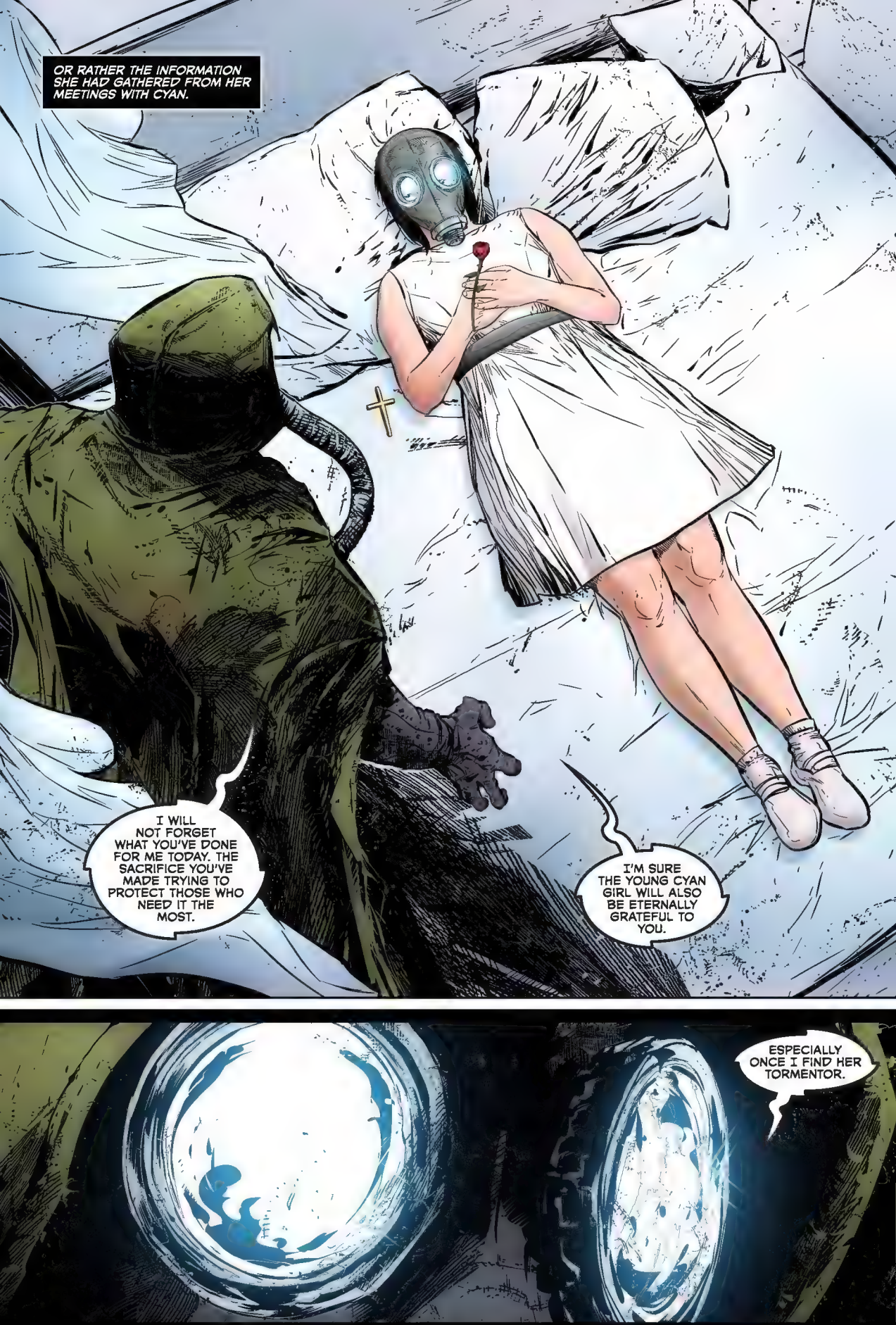
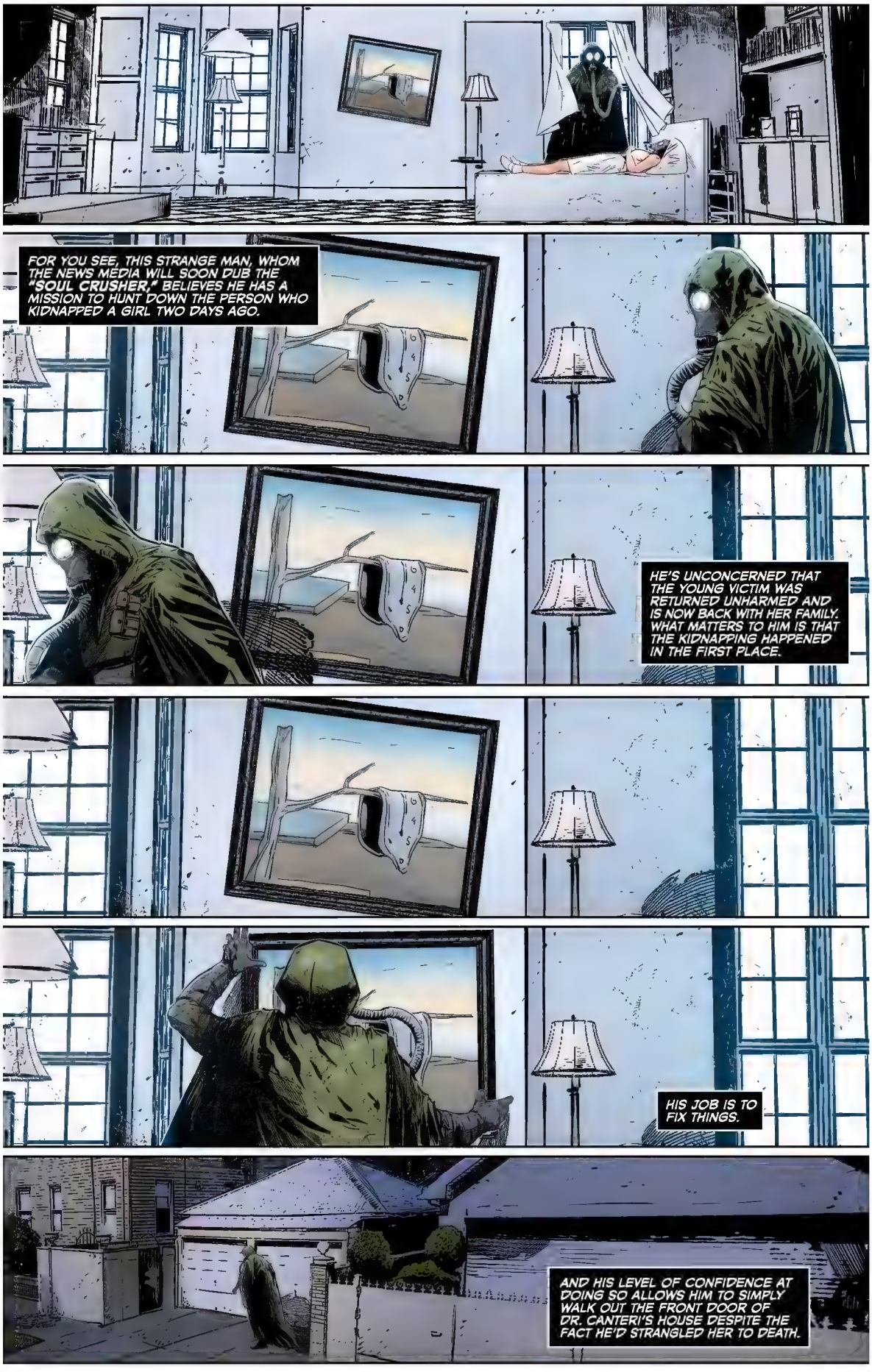
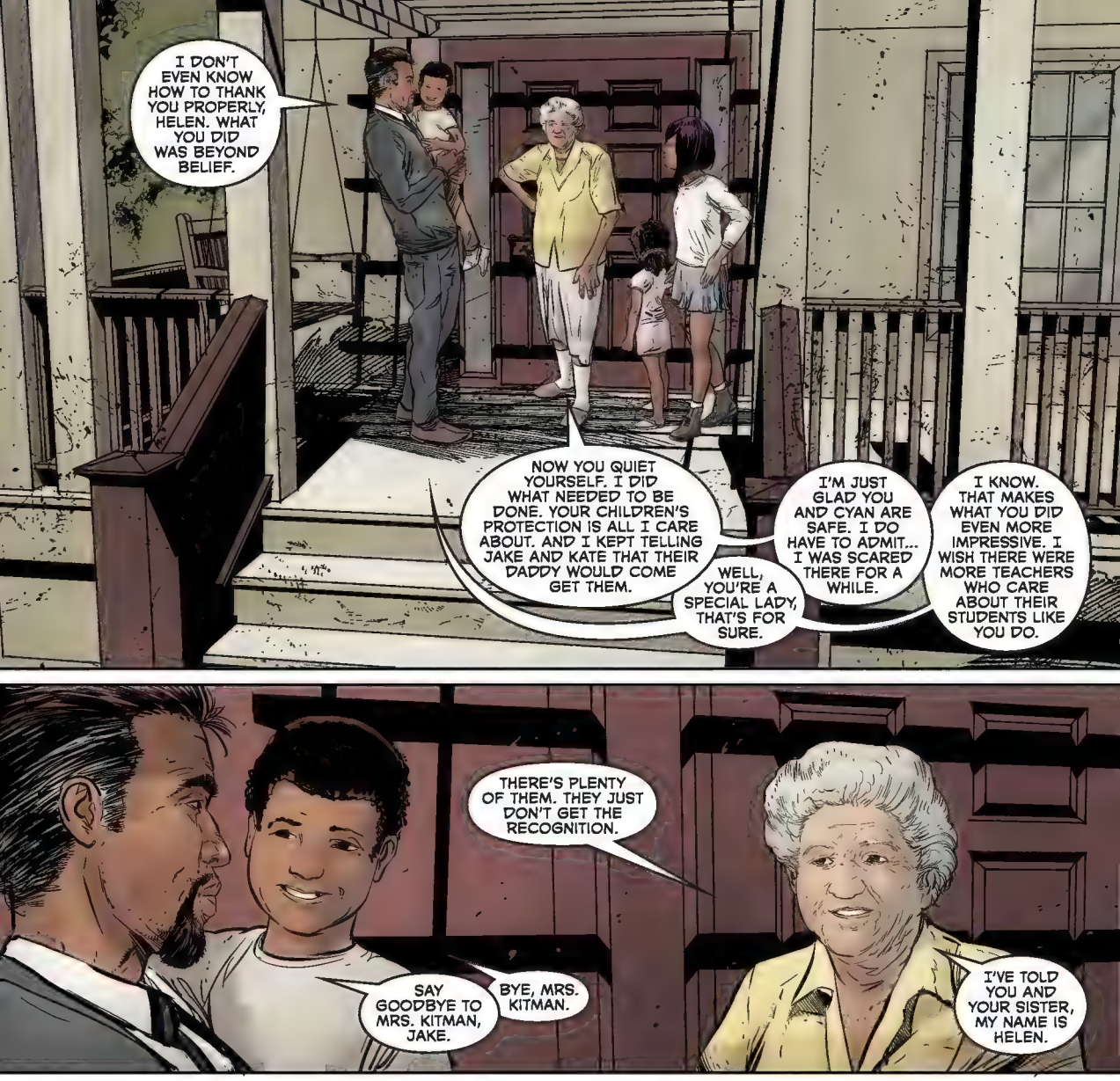

HER NAME WAS DR. EMMA CANTERI. ALL SHE EVER WANTED WAS TO HELP THOSE IN NEED. AS A YOUNG GIRL, SHE VOLUNTEERED AT AN ANIMAL SHELTER. IN HER TEENS, IT WAS A HOMELESS SHELTER. BY HIGH SCHOOL SHE KNEW SHE WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR. BY AGE TWENTY-EIGHT SHE WAS ONE.
AND SHE HAD GOTTEN HER 'DREAM JOB' BY JOINING A STAFF THAT HELPED TEENAGERS BATTLING DRUG ADDICTION.
THIS WAS HER CALLING. HER PURPOSE IN LIFE. IT'S ALSO WHERE SHE MET A PATIENT NAMED CYAN FITZGERALD. A YOUTH WHO HAD LOST HER MOTHER AND WAS RECENTLY IN THE NEWS FOR DISAPPEARING FROM THE FACILITY DR. CANTERI WORKED AT.
SADLY, IT WAS MEETING AND HELPING CYAN THAT HAS NOW COST DR. CANTERI HER LIFE.


OR RATHER THE INFORMATION SHE HAD GATHERED FROM HER MEETINGS WITH CYAN.
I WILL NOT FORGET WHAT YOU'VE DONE FOR ME TODAY. THE SACRIFICE YOU'VE MADE TRYING TO PROTECT THOSE WHO NEED IT THE MOST.
I'M SURE THE YOUNG CYAN GIRL WILL ALSO BE ETERNALLY GRATEFUL TO YOU.
ESPECIALLY ONCE I FIND HER TORMENTOR.


FOR YOU SEE, THIS STRANGE MAN, WHOM THE NEWS MEDIA WILL SOON DUB THE "SOUL CRUSHER," BELIEVES HE HAS A MISSION TO HUNT DOWN THE PERSON WHO KIDNAPPED A GIRL TWO DAYS AGO.
HE'S UNCONCERNED THAT THE YOUNG VICTIM WAS RETURNED UNHARMED AND IS NOW BACK WITH HER FAMILY. WHAT MATTERS TO HIM IS THAT THE KIDNAPPING HAPPENED IN THE FIRST PLACE.
HIS JOB IS TO FIX THINGS.
AND HIS LEVEL OF CONFIDENCE AT DOING SO ALLOWS HIM TO SIMPLY WALK OUT THE FRONT DOOR OF DR. CANTERI'S HOUSE DESPITE THE FACT HE'D STRANGLED HER TO DEATH.


I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU PROPERLY, HELEN. WHAT YOU DID WAS BEYOND BELIEF.
NOW YOU QUIET YOURSELF. I DID WHAT NEEDED TO BE DONE. YOUR CHILDREN'S PROTECTION IS ALL I CARE ABOUT. AND I KEPT TELLING JAKE AND KATE THAT THEIR DADDY WOULD COME GET THEM.
WELL, YOU'RE A SPECIAL LADY, THAT'S FOR SURE.
I'M JUST GLAD YOU AND CYAN ARE SAFE. I DO HAVE TO ADMIT... I WAS SCARED THERE FOR A WHILE.
I KNOW. THAT MAKES WHAT YOU DID EVEN MORE IMPRESSIVE. I WISH THERE WERE MORE TEACHERS WHO CARE ABOUT THEIR STUDENTS LIKE YOU DO.

THERE'S PLENTY OF THEM. THEY JUST DON'T GET THE RECOGNITION.
SAY GOODBYE TO MRS. KITMAN, JAKE.
BYE, MRS. KITMAN.
I'VE TOLD YOU AND YOUR SISTER, MY NAME IS HELEN.

LIKE DAD SAID, YOU ROCK, MRS. K. I DON'T THINK KATE WANTS TO EVEN COME WITH US, YOU TREATED HER SO GOOD.

YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF. AND I HOPE THOSE MEDIA PEOPLE DON'T BUG YOU TOO MUCH.
ME TOO.

CHINATOWN. FRED'S MILITARY SUPPLY STORE.
WANT YO
Jesus. 270 dollars?! I don't even know what it is.
ANY IDEA WHERE A PERSON WOULD ACQUIRE A MASK LIKE THAT?
I CHECKED MY DATABASE, BUT SOMETHING THAT VINTAGE-- THOSE ARE HARD TO COME BY.
SO, YOU THINK IT'S AUTHENTIC?
FOR SURE. FROM THE DESIGN OF THE RESPIRATOR, IT WAS MOST LIKELY MADE IN POLAND AROUND 1910.

ARE THERE VERY MANY OF THESE FLOATING AROUND?
LIKE I TOLD YOU OVER THE PHONE... IF IT'S REAL, WHICH I THINK IT IS, THAT MASK, IN DECENT CONDITION, GOES FOR OVER TWO GRAND... IF YOU CAN FIND ONE. EVEN MORE FOR THE DOG'S MASK.
TWO GRAND?
YEP. WHOEVER OWNED THEM, THEY'RE NOT STARVING THAT'S FOR SURE.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE.
ANY TIME.
I DON'T GET IT. NORMALLY THE BAD GUYS STEAL THINGS BECAUSE THEY NEED MONEY. THEY GENERALLY DON'T LEAVE THEIR EXPENSIVE ITEMS BEHIND AS GIFTS. SO, THIS WHACK JOB IS EITHER COCKY AS HELL OR ISN'T IN IT FOR THE MONEY.
OR BOTH.
SO FAR IT DOESN'T APPEAR THAT HE TOOK ANYTHING FROM THE MAITLIN HOUSE. MEANING HE WAS THERE STRICTLY TO MURDER.*
*Past few issues– Todd.

AND GIVEN THE WORLD MAITLIN WORKS IN--EVERYONE HE'D BUMP INTO IS LOADED.
WE JUST NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHO HE'S SO SCARED OF THAT HE WON'T RAT OUT THE POSSIBLE KILLER OF HIS BOY.
AND THAT'LL TAKE A LOT OF WORK SO I NEED TO REFUEL. LET'S STOP HERE, OKAY?
A DONUT SHOP? YOU KNOW YOU'RE BECOMING A POLICE CLICHÉ?
YOU WANT ANYTHING?
NO. YOU GO HELP YOURSELF. I CAN'T EVEN STAND THE SMELL INSIDE THERE.
ALRIGHT, MR. VEGETARIAN, SUIT YOURSELF. BUT I'M NOT SHARING ANY WITH YOU.
PROMISE?
TWITCH.
AL? YOU'RE...
WE NEED TO TALK.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
I WAS-- FOR A WHILE.
SO THAT WAS YOU I SAW ON THE NEWS? I'M GLAD THAT GIRL IS OKAY.
THE SHADOW PLAYERS WERE HUNTING HER. SHE NEEDED MY PROTECTION.
WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER SPAWN? JIM DOWNING. IS HE STILL IN A COMA?
HAVEN'T CHECKED. BUT I NEED A FAVOR. THE GIRL--I'M SENDING HER TO JAPAN. AND I NEED SOMEONE TO CHECK ON HER FROM TIME TO TIME. DO YOU HAVE ANY CONTACTS OVER THERE YOU TRUST, WHO DON'T LIKE TO TALK? BECAUSE THIS IS A SERIOUS SITUATION.
I HAVE SOMEONE I CAN CALL. WHEN IS THIS GOING TO ALL HAPPEN?
SOON. I'LL LET YOU KNOW.
THANKS, TWITCH. THIS WILL HELP.
HEY. WHO'S THAT GUY YOU WERE TALKING TO?
NO ONE. JUST SOMEONE THAT WAS LOST.
DONUTS

I THINK IT'S TOO SOON, TERRY.
I DON'T. CYAN NEEDS TO GET BACK TO SOME SENSE OF NORMAL LIFE.
THE KIDS AT SCHOOL. THEY GET THE NEWS TOO. SHE'LL BE STARED AT ALL DAY.
AND KEEPING HER HOME ANOTHER WEEK OR TWO ISN'T GOING TO STOP THAT. LOOK, I KNOW YOU MEAN WELL, BUT I HAD A LONG TALK WITH HER LAST NIGHT. IT WAS PROBABLY THE FIRST TIME SINCE WANDA DIED THAT CYAN SOUNDED... GOOD.
DO YOU KNOW HOW LONG IT'S BEEN SINCE I'VE HEARD HER TALK OF WANTING TO JOIN THE WORLD INSTEAD OF PUSHING IT AWAY? I CAN'T IGNORE THAT. AND I'M SURE AS HELL NOT GOING TO HIDE MY FAMILY AWAY.
DID SHE TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED WHILE YOU WERE GONE?
PIECES. SHE SAID SHE CAN'T REMEMBER EVERYTHING.
AND THAT DOESN'T WORRY YOU? THAT THERE ARE BREAKS IN HER MEMORY?
I HAVE TO DO THIS, AL.
THEY'LL COME AGAIN. LOOKING FOR YOU OR HER. MAYBE EVEN THE TWINS. ANYTHING TO GET MY ATTENTION. I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN DO WHAT I NEED TO AND WATCH YOUR FAMILY.
"THEN JUST DO YOUR BEST, AL. FOR NOW I NEED MY FAMILY TO BE 'NORMAL' FOR ONE DAY."

CYAN REALLY DID WANT TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL BUT LIKE ANY TEENAGER, SHE STILL DREADED WHAT THE OTHER STUDENTS WOULD BE THINKING ABOUT HER. SHE KNEW THEY MUST HAVE HEARD THE RUMORS OF HER DRUG USE AND BECAUSE OF HER "KIDNAPPING", THE NEWS REPORTED SHE WAS IN A REHABILITATION FACILITY.
BUT WHAT SHE'S MOST ANXIOUS ABOUT IS SOMETHING ELSE...WHAT IF HER 'WEIRD-POWERS-THING' STARTS UP WHILE SHE'S AT SCHOOL?
BUT SHE'LL NEVER KNOW NOW...
...BECAUSE SHE'LL NEVER MAKE IT BACK TO SCHOOL.

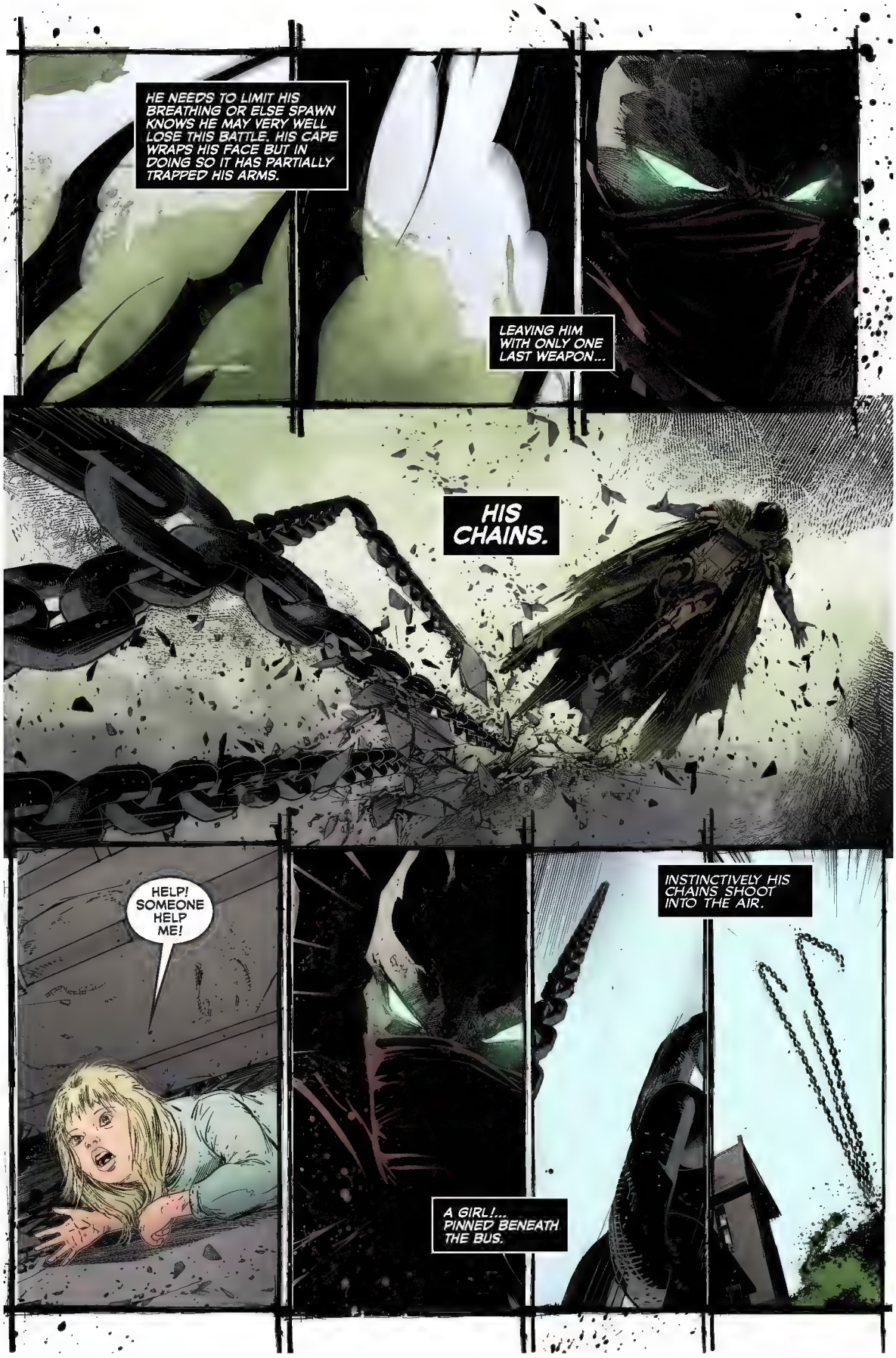
I'VE GOT YOU!
ARE YOU OKAY?
YES.
I'M SORRY I HAD TO WRECK YOUR BUS, BUT YOU AND I NEED TO DO SOMETHING.
WE NEED TO STOP THE MAN WHO TOOK YOU FROM THE HOSPITAL BEFORE THE POLICE DO.
AND WE NEED TO MAKE SURE HE NEVER HURTS ANOTHER CHILD AGAIN.
LET GO!
YOU'RE HURTING ME!
PLEASE. HELP ME SAVE THE CHILDREN.
YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW WHERE HE IS?
I DO, MY CHILD.
HE'S BEHIND YOU.

GET BEHIND ME! HE'S NOT GOING TO TOUCH YOU!

SPAWN HAS A CLEAN SHOT BUT CYAN IS TOO CLOSE TO HIS TARGET. HE WON'T ENDANGER ANY OF THE KIDS, SOME WHO ARE STILL HURT, INSIDE THE BUS.
THAT HESITATION GIVES SOUL CRUSHER THE OPENING SALVO.
RUN!
ALL OF YOU!
THOSE HEALTHY ENOUGH HEED HIS WORDS.

AND HE FINALLY HAS HIS SHOT. BUT SPAWN HASN'T ANTICIPATED THAT SOUL CRUSHER'S SUIT HAS BEEN AUGMENTED FOR MOVEMENT FASTER THAN A NORMAL HUMAN.
BLAM BLAM
KRAKOW
I WARNED YOU.
GOD DAMN IT! I TOLD YOUR SIDE TO LEAVE HER ALONE!
KRAK
LIKE A CRAZED ANIMAL, SPAWN LUNGES AT HIS OPPONENT, THINKING THIS IS ANOTHER DEMON. A TRAPPED DENIZEN OF HELL TRYING TO USE CYAN LIKE SOME HUMAN PIECE OF BAIT.

IF NOT FOR THE FORTIFIED ARMOR HE WEARS, SOUL CRUSHER WOULD BE DEAD ALREADY.
TELL THEM! TELL THEM ALL! I'M COMING FOR THEM NOW! THIS IS GOING TO STOP!
YOU'RE INSANE! I'M HERE ALONE.
UNSEEN TO SPAWN, SOUL CRUSHER RELEASES A TOXIC GAS THAT BURNS THE SKIN IN A MATTER OF SECONDS.
AND EVEN AGAINST A MAN MADE IN HELL, THE PAIN IS EXCRUCIATING.


HE NEEDS TO LIMIT HIS BREATHING OR ELSE SPAWN KNOWS HE MAY VERY WELL LOSE THIS BATTLE. HIS CAPE WRAPS HIS FACE BUT IN DOING SO IT HAS PARTIALLY TRAPPED HIS ARMS.
LEAVING HIM WITH ONLY ONE LAST WEAPON...
HIS CHAINS.
HELP! SOMEONE HELP ME!
A GIRL!... PINNED BENEATH THE BUS.
INSTINCTIVELY HIS CHAINS SHOOT INTO THE AIR.

SPAWN BETS A MULTI-PRONGED ATTACK FROM ABOVE WILL CONFUSE HIS ASSAILANT.
IT DOES.
AS THE STREET'S ASPHALT EXPLODES, THEN COLLAPSES, IT SWALLOWS THE VILLAIN WHOLE.
THOUGH NOTHING MATTERS MORE THAN THE LITTLE GIRL IN DESPERATE NEED OF HELP.
SPAWN CURSES HIMSELF THAT HE'S BARELY MORE THAN A STRONG MAN, BECAUSE THE BUS WON'T MOVE.
LET ME HELP YOU.
THEN CYAN GENTLY TOUCHES SPAWN'S ARM.

IT SENDS A SMALL IMPULSE UP HIS ARM... WITH A RESULT THAT WILL FOREVER BE RECALLED BY THOSE WHO WITNESSED IT.
GO! BOTH OF YOU!

YOU OKAY?
I THINK SO. MY LEG HURTS BUT... THANKS FOR GETTING ME. BUT HOW DO YOU THINK THAT MAN WITH THE CAPE DID WHAT HE DID? IT WAS LIKE IMPOSSIBLE, RIGHT?
I THINK HE DID IT BECAUSE HE KNEW HOW SPECIAL YOU WERE. AND HE THOUGHT YOU WERE HURT REALLY BAD, SO HE GOT SUPER MAD AND JUST LIFTED IT AWAY FOR YOU.
YOU REALLY THINK THAT'S TRUE?
I THINK SO.
THAT'S AWESOME.
CYAN – WE NEED TO LEAVE. I HEAR SIRENS COMING AND WE CAN'T BE AROUND WHEN THEY GET HERE.
JANIE!
MR. FRED!
CAN YOU MAKE SURE THE PARAMEDICS CHECK HER?

IS HE DOWN THERE?
NO. THE HOLE BREECHED A SEWER LINE. I'M SURE HE'S LONG GONE BY NOW.
WHO WAS HE?
NOT SURE. HE DIDN'T ACT LIKE WHO I THOUGHT HE WAS.
WHAT DID YOU THINK HE WAS?
A DEMON. BUT WE CAN TALK LATER. CYAN?
CAN YOU DO THAT INVISIBLE THING YOU DO?
I'LL TRY.
IN A BLINK THEY'RE GONE. LEAVING BEHIND CARNAGE THAT WILL BECOME ANOTHER TOP NEWS STORY. BUT THIS HAS SEALED WHAT SPAWN ALREADY KNEW... THAT CYAN ISN'T SAFE LIVING IN AMERICA ANY LONGER.

SPAWN
image
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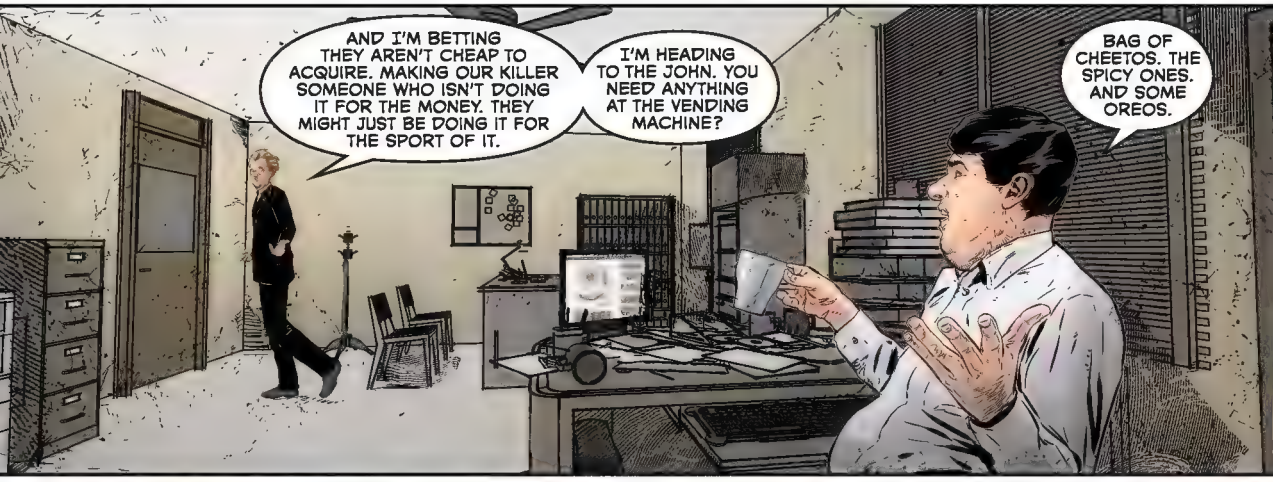
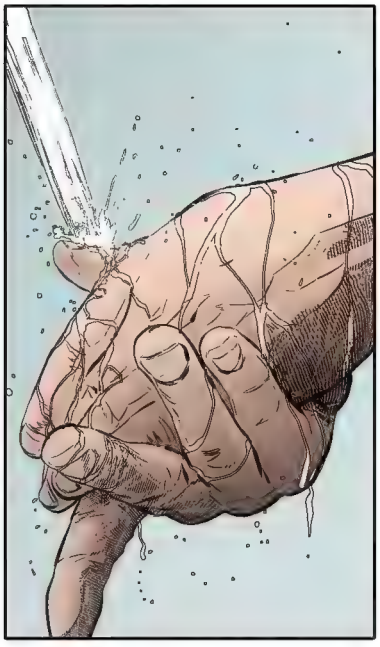
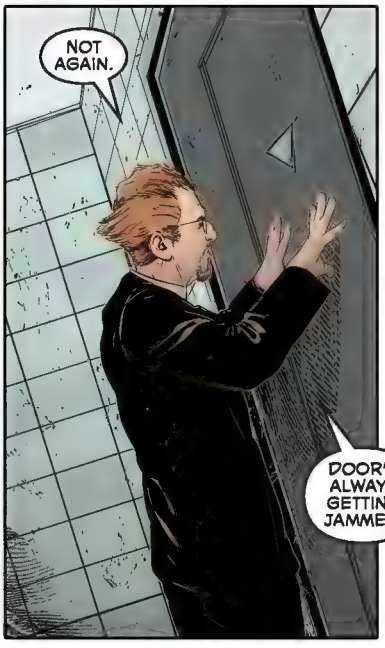
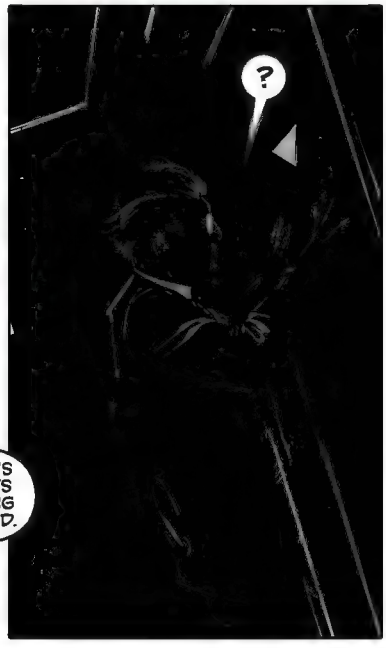
THAT'S INTERESTING.
WHAT'S THAT?
I CROSSED REFERENCED THE TYPE OF LEATHER USED ON THOSE TWO GAS MASKS AGAINST THE MANUFACTURERS KNOWN FOR THEIR LEATHER PRODUCTION. NOTHING COMES UP.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, NOTHING COMES UP?
I MEAN THE TYPE OF LEATHER IN THOSE MASKS HASN'T BEEN USED FOR OVER SEVENTY YEARS. SOME KIND OF GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS SAID THE CHEMICALS INVOLVED WERE TOXIC OR SOMETHING.
IF THAT'S TRUE, THOSE MASKS ARE VINTAGE MODELS.


AND I'M BETTING THEY AREN'T CHEAP TO ACQUIRE. MAKING OUR KILLER SOMEONE WHO ISN'T DOING IT FOR THE MONEY. THEY MIGHT JUST BE DOING IT FOR THE SPORT OF IT.
I'M HEADING TO THE JOHN. YOU NEED ANYTHING AT THE VENDING MACHINE?
BAG OF CHEETOS. THE SPICY ONES. AND SOME OREOS.

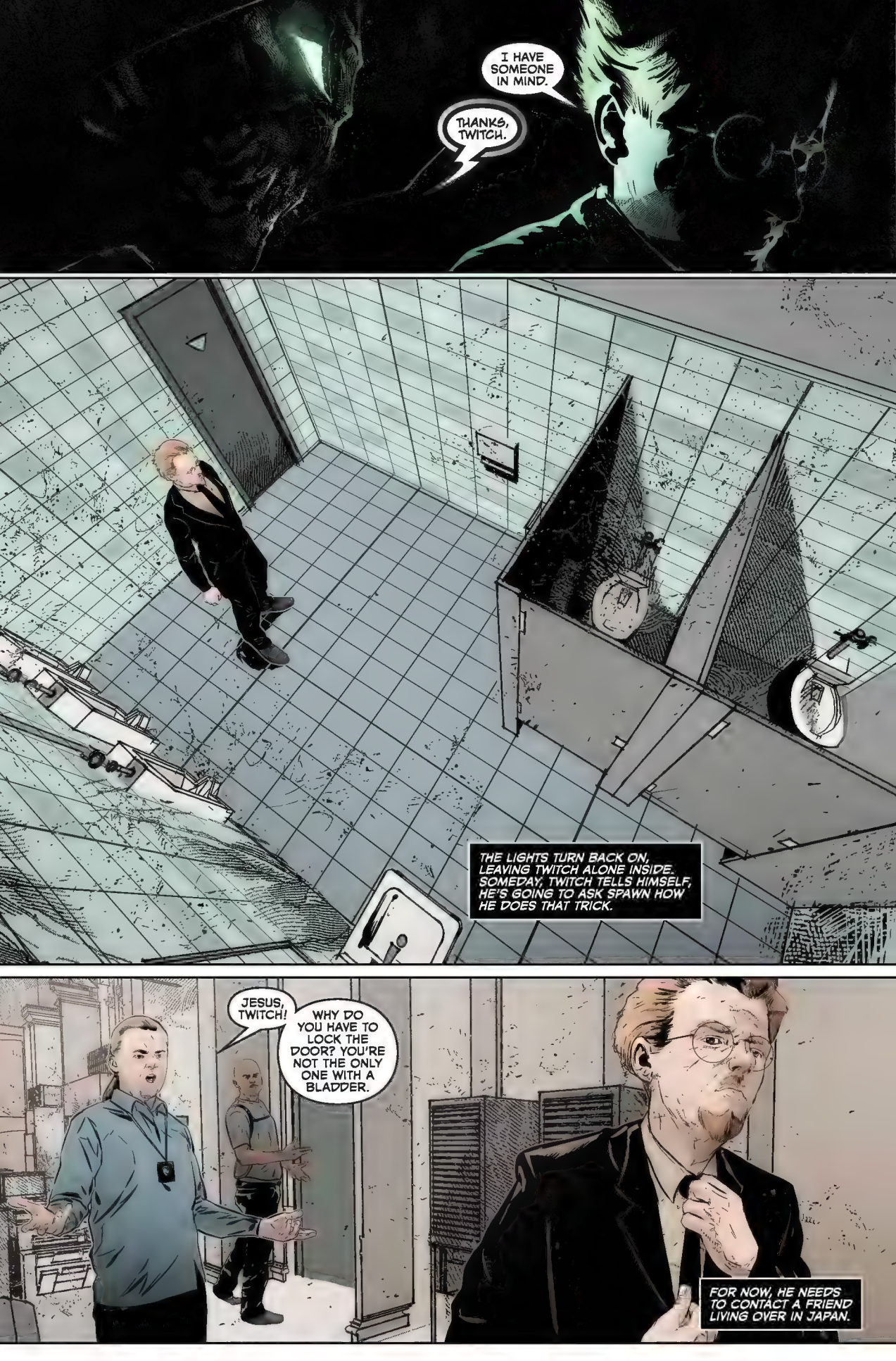
TINK
TINK




NOT AGAIN.
DOOR'S ALWAYS GETTING JAMMED.


?

I NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME.
WELL, GOOD MORNING TO YOU TOO.
I DON'T HAVE TIME FOR SMALL TALK. NOT RIGHT NOW.
I SEE YOU'RE QUITE THE INTERNET SENSATION RESCUING THOSE SCHOOL KIDS. THOUGHT YOU WERE MORE DISCREET THAN THAT?*
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE. MY HAND IS BEING FORCED.
BY THE SHADOW PLAYERS?
MAYBE. I'M SENDING SOMEONE TO TOKYO TO PROTECT THEM--BUT I WON'T BE THERE TO WATCH EVERY MOMENT. SO, I NEED HELP. PEOPLE I CAN TRUST. I'M HOPING YOU HAVE A CONTACT OVER THERE YOU CAN RECOMMEND.
*See last issue--Todd
AND YOU DON'T WANT ANYONE TO KNOW THIS IS HAPPENING?
EXACTLY.
THIS PERSON YOU'RE HIDING, THEY MUST BE VERY IMPORTANT TO YOU.
SHE IS.
I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.


I HAVE SOMEONE IN MIND.
THANKS, TWITCH.
THE LIGHTS TURN BACK ON, LEAVING TWITCH ALONE INSIDE. SOMEDAY, TWITCH TELLS HIMSELF, HE'S GOING TO ASK SPAWN HOW HE DOES THAT TRICK.
JESUS, TWITCH!
WHY DO YOU HAVE TO LOCK THE DOOR? YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE WITH A BLADDER.
FOR NOW, HE NEEDS TO CONTACT A FRIEND LIVING OVER IN JAPAN.

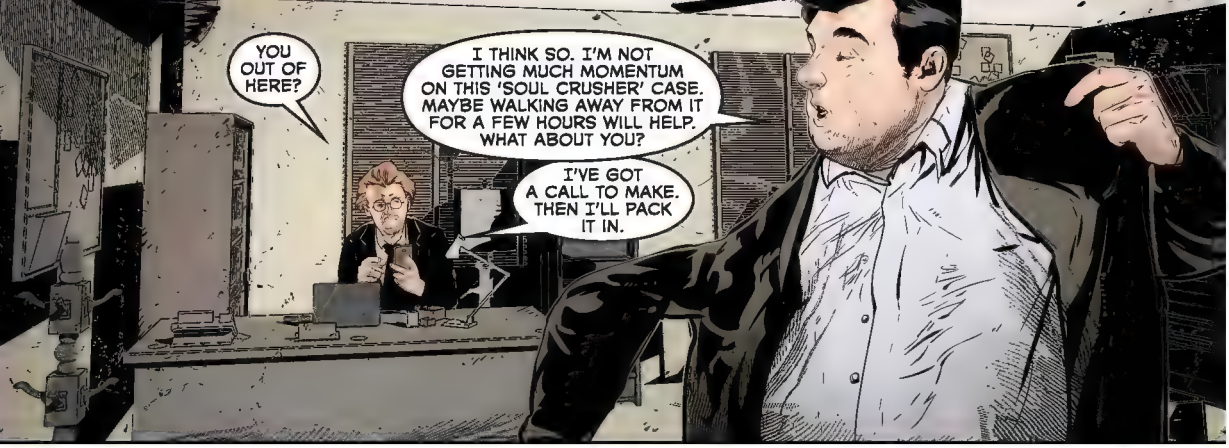
I CAN'T DO THAT TO MY FAMILY AGAIN. NOT NOW.
TERRY, I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH, BUT WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY ISN'T GOING TO STOP.
THEY'LL ATTACK AGAIN.
AND SO I'M SUPPOSED TO BREAK UP MY KIDS AGAIN?
GUYS!... MAYBE WE SHOULD TAKE THIS CONVERSATION INTO THE KITCHEN.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT CYAN'S BEEN THROUGH SINCE WANDA DIED. ALL THE SHIT SHE'S DEALT WITH. SHE'S JUST A TEENAGER. SHE WASN'T MATURE ENOUGH TO HANDLE IT ALL.
"AND NOW I SEE HER WITH HER BROTHER AND SISTER SMILING AGAIN."
DO YOU KNOW *HOW LONG* IT'S BEEN SINCE SHE LAST SMILED?
I'M JUST TRYING TO PROTECT WHAT YOU HAVE.

YOU DON'T HAVE A LOT OF OPTIONS HERE TERRY. IT'S HELL YOU'RE DEALING WITH, NOT SOME GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION. THEY'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET TO ME.
THIS ISN'T A GAME.
A GAME? DON'T YOU TELL ME WHAT I'M UP AGAINST! I'VE GOT A DEAD WIFE BECAUSE OF YOU!
AND IF THIS ISN'T A GAME, THEN WHERE DID YOU DISAPPEAR TO THE PAST FEW YEARS?!
MY FAMILY HAS BEEN NOTHING BUT A TARGET BECAUSE OF YOU. LOOK AT MY KIDS, I HAVE TO RAISE THEM WITHOUT A MOTHER BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T DO YOUR JOB. CYAN HAS SUFFERED ENOUGH.
SHE HAS. BUT YOU MADE IT WORSE.
WHAT'D YOU SAY!?
TELL ME TERRY, WHAT KIND OF FATHER SUPPLIES DRUGS TO HIS OWN DAUGHTER? IF SHE WAS MY KID, I'D...
THUD
SHE'S NOT YOURS!
YOU BASTARD! YOU WEREN'T HERE! YOU KNOW NOTHING!
TERRY!
AL! STOP THIS. YOU GUYS ARE MAKING THINGS WORSE.

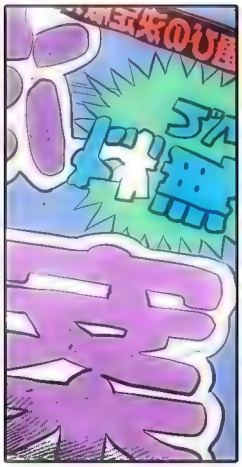
NOW SETTLE DOWN! BOTH OF YOU.
AND WHAT DID YOU MEAN-- YOU'RE DEALING WITH HELL?
HE DOESN'T KNOW?
NOT COMPLETELY.
AND YOU EXPECT EARL TO JUST BECOME A TARGET TOO, LIKE CYAN. AT LEAST HAVE THE GUTS TO SHOW HIM WHAT YOU ARE.
YOU'RE RIGHT.

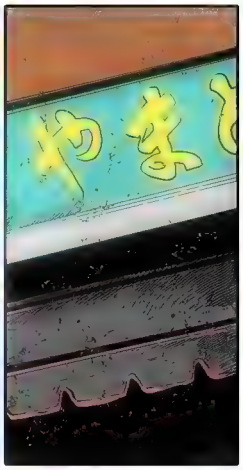
EVERYONE NEEDS TO UNDERSTAND THE DANGER THEY'RE IN.
BUT EARL ISN'T A TEENAGER. HE'S DEALT WITH THE LIES AND DECEIT AND CONS OF ADULTS ALREADY. CYAN DOESN'T HAVE THE SKILL AT THIS AGE TO DECIPHER WHEN SHE'S BEING LED INTO A TRAP. AND PHYSICALLY THEY'D DESTROY HER.
I'M ASKING YOU TO MOVE HER, NOT HIDE HER. JUST PUT A LITTLE DISTANCE BETWEEN HER AND THEM.
WHERE WOULD SHE GO?
JAPAN.
THERE ARE PEOPLE THERE WITH "SPECIAL" SKILLS WILLING TO HELP. TO GIVE HER A HOME.

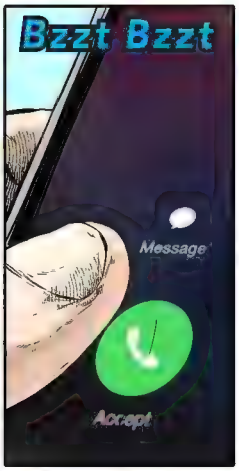
I WISH THERE WAS SOME OTHER WAY. BUT THEY'LL KILL HER OTHERWISE.
WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO AFTER SHE GOES?
I'M GOING TO KILL THEM FIRST.
HOW MANY ARE THERE?
I DON'T KNOW.
THEN HOW LONG IS IT GOING TO TAKE?
UNTIL NONE OF THEM ARE LEFT.
I'M... LET ME TALK TO MY CHILDREN.
TAKE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED.
SO, THIS IS THE KIND OF SHIT I'M INVOLVED IN?


YOU OUT OF HERE?
I THINK SO. I'M NOT GETTING MUCH MOMENTUM ON THIS 'SOUL CRUSHER' CASE. MAYBE WALKING AWAY FROM IT FOR A FEW HOURS WILL HELP. WHAT ABOUT YOU?
I'VE GOT A CALL TO MAKE. THEN I'LL PACK IT IN.

C'MON, PICK UP. I KNOW YOU'RE THERE.






Bzzt Bzzt
Message
Accept

WELL, WELL. THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED SURPRISE, TWITCH. YOU CALLING FOR BUSINESS OR PLEASURE?
BUSINESS. THE PRIVATE KIND.
SOUNDS SERIOUS. SO, WHAT DO YOU NEED ME TO DO?

"...AND DO YOU, WANDA BLAKE, TAKE AL SIMMONS TO BE YOUR LAWFULLY WEDDED HUSBAND...
"...TO CHERISH AND TO HONOR...
"...THROUGH SICKNESS AND THROUGH HEALTH UNTIL...
"...DEATH DO YOU PART?"

WANDA!

2:37 A.M.
CYAN...?
WHAT'RE YOU DOING UP?

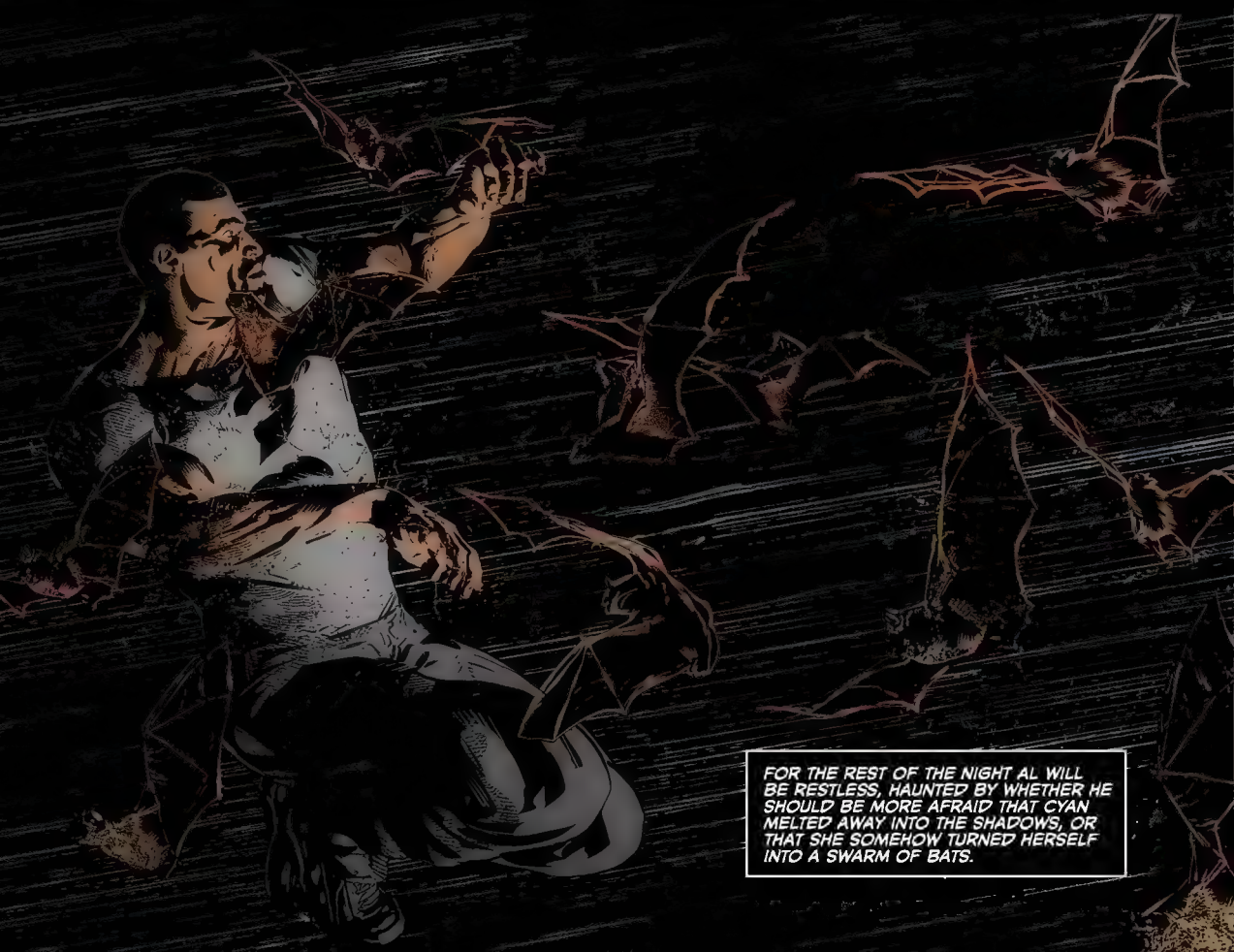
I'M SORRY IF I WOKE YOU UP. I... I WAS HAVING A BAD DREAM. YOU SHOULD GET BACK TO BED, IT'S LATE.
DO YOU HEAR ME?
CYAN?
CYAN ISN'T HERE. SHE'S RESTING.
FAR, FAR AWAY.
BUT SHE SENT ME TO WARN YOU--THEY AREN'T COMING FOR HER, THEY'RE COMING FOR YOU.

AND YOU CAN'T BEAT THEM ALONE. YOU'LL DIE.
BUT THEY CAN HELP.

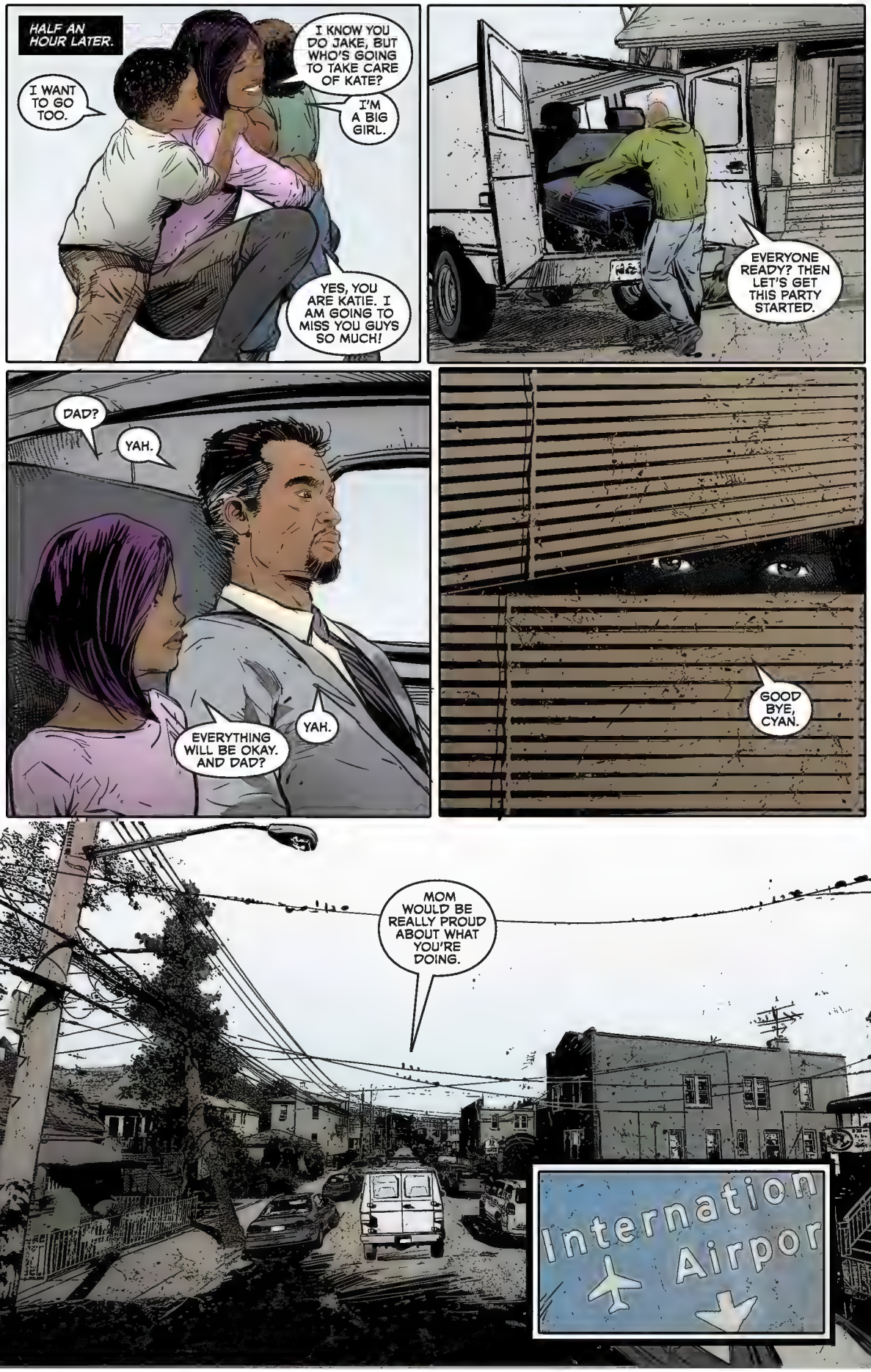
WHO CAN HELP?
THE 'OTHERS.'

WHAT... WAS THAT!?
YOUR POWERS. THEY'VE BEEN RESTORED.
YOU'VE BEEN ACTING LIKE A HUMAN FOR TOO LONG. YOU CAN'T WIN THE WAR THAT WAY. YOU NEED YOUR FULL STRENGTH.
AND MAGICALLY YOU'VE MADE MY COSTUME WORK AGAIN?
NO. I'VE MADE *YOU* WORK AGAIN. YOU'RE SPAWN. NOT YOUR COSTUME. IT'S *NEVER* BEEN ABOUT YOUR COSTUME.
HELL. HEAVEN. YOURSELF. YOU'VE ALL BELIEVED THE POWER WAS IN YOUR COSTUME. IT WASN'T. SPAWN IS INSIDE YOU. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THAT--AND LET YOUR ENEMIES FOOL THEMSELVES INTO BELIEVING WHATEVER THEY WANT.
BUT WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, YOU'LL BE A KING AND THE 'OTHERS' WILL RISE AND FOLLOW YOU.
WHO ARE YOU?
I'M WHAT THEY MADE ME. WHAT THEY MAKE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE HAVE TO LIVE WITH EVERY DAY OF THEIR LIVES.
MY NAME IS *'MISERY'*. AND BEFORE LONG I AM GOING TO JOIN YOUR WAR TOO. BECAUSE I KNOW YOU'RE STRONG AND DETERMINED AND WILL BE RELENTLESS, BUT I ALSO KNOW SOMETHING ELSE--THAT YOU ARE A GOOD MAN.

THEY'RE WAITING FOR YOU. BECOME THEIR KING.
AND LEAD THEM.


FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT AL WILL BE RESTLESS, HAUNTED BY WHETHER HE SHOULD BE MORE AFRAID THAT CYAN MELTED AWAY INTO THE SHADOWS, OR THAT SHE SOMEHOW TURNED HERSELF INTO A SWARM OF BATS.

WE HAD A LONG TALK ABOUT IT LAST NIGHT. THIS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO. I BOOKED THE TICKETS BEFORE I WENT TO BED.
I'LL SEND THE REST OF CYAN'S STUFF LATER.
I KNOW THIS IS HARD FOR YOU, TERRY.
THANKS TWITCH, I OWE YOU BIG TIME. YOU DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH THIS WILL PUT HER FATHER'S MIND TO REST.
WHAT'S THAT?
YEAH. SOMEONE WILL BE WAITING FOR THEM AT THE AIRPORT. TERRY WILL GET TO SEE HOW NORMAL CYAN'S LIFE WILL BE. AND THE PEOPLE BOARDING HER HAVE BEEN IN THIS BATTLE A LONG, LONG TIME.
HEY UNCLE AL, HOW WAS YOUR SLEEP?
I'VE HAD BETTER. WHY? HOW WAS YOURS?
AWESOME. I'M KIND OF EXCITED ABOUT MY TRIP.
YOU KNOW I'LL BE THERE ANYTIME YOU NEED. YOU JUST CALL. OKAY?
I WILL. I LOVE YOU. MISS ME LOTS.


HALF AN HOUR LATER.
I WANT TO GO TOO.
I KNOW YOU DO JAKE, BUT WHO'S GOING TO TAKE CARE OF KATE?
I'M A BIG GIRL.
YES, YOU ARE KATIE. I AM GOING TO MISS YOU GUYS SO MUCH!
EVERYONE READY? THEN LET'S GET THIS PARTY STARTED.
DAD?
YAH.
EVERYTHING WILL BE OKAY. AND DAD?
YAH.
GOOD BYE, CYAN.
MOM WOULD BE REALLY PROUD ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
Internation
Airpor

WHOA.

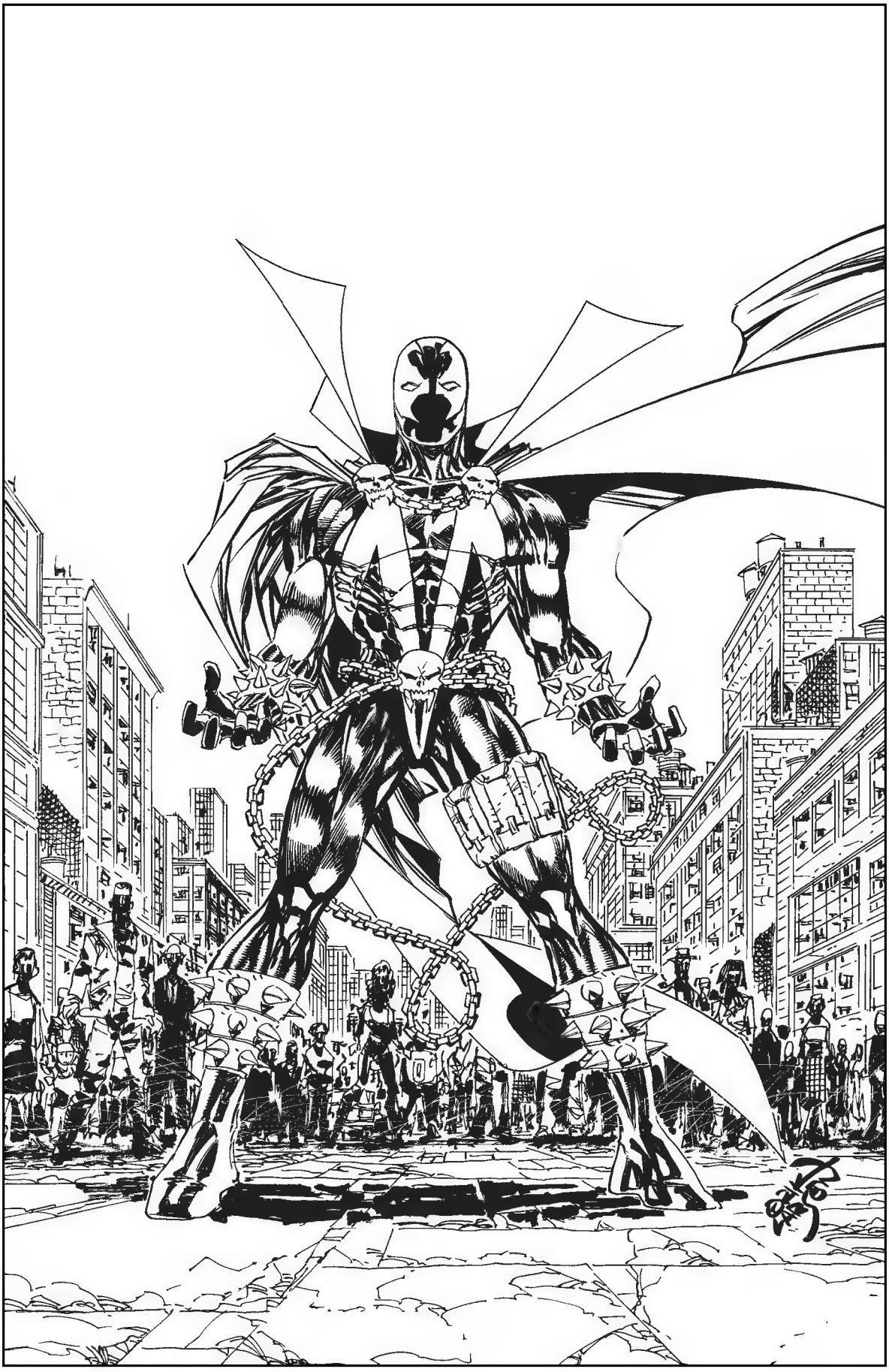
THAT'S COOL.

WELCOME TO TOKYO, JAPAN.
NEXT ISSUE: AMAZING ARTWORK BY
JASON SHAWN ALEXANDER

SPAWN®

HELL ON EARTH

ALTERNATE COVERS GALLERY



Spawn *#263 Black and White Cover by Erik Larsen*

Spawn #264 Black and White Cover by Erik Larsen

Spawn *#265 Black and White Cover by Erik Larsen*

Spawn #266 *Black and White Cover by Erik Larsen*

Spawn *#266 Black and White Alternate Cover by Todd McFarlane*

Spawn #267 Alternate Cover by Jordan Butler

Spawn *#268 Black and White Alternate Cover by Faraz Shanyar*

Spawn #269 Black and White Cover by Hicham Hibachi

Spawn *#270 Black and White Cover by Nivanh Chanthara*

Spawn #271 Black and White Cover by Ashley Wood

Spawn *#272 Black and White Cover by Todd McFarlane*

Spawn #273 *Black and White Cover by Ramon Nunez*

Spawn *#274 Black and White Alternate Cover by Ashley Wood*

Spawn #275 Black and White Cover by Hicham Hibachi

Spawn #275 Alternate Cover, Amazing Las Vegas Exclusive by Ashley Wood

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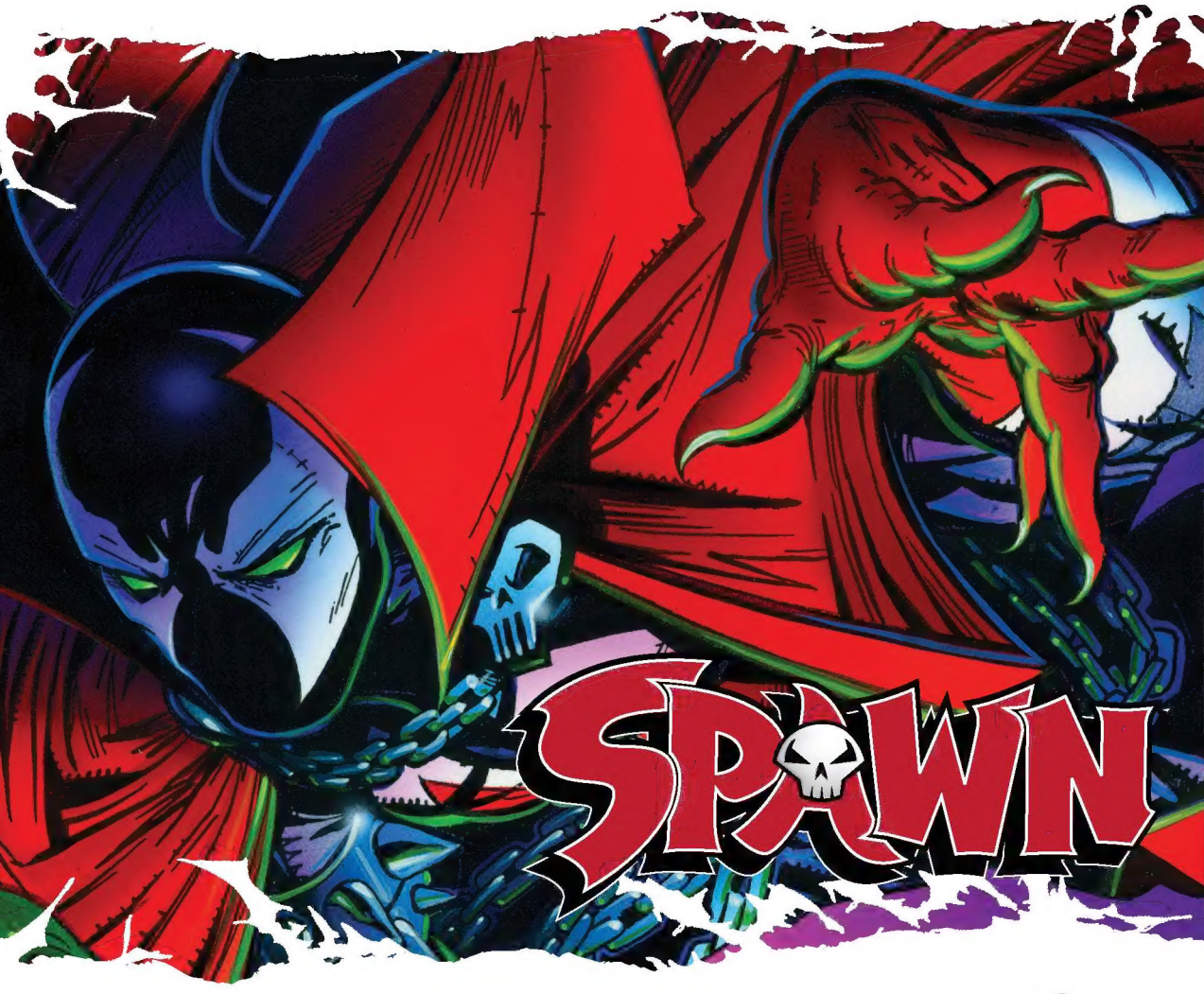

SPAWN WHEREVER YOU ARE.

The ENTIRE *Spawn* comic library and *Spawn Origins Collection* Volumes 1 – 20 is now available in digital format from ComiXology, iBooks, Google Play, and imagecomics.com. Fans can immerse themselves with 23 years and 250+ issues of *Spawn* with the simple swipe of a fingertip. *Spawn* is one of the world's best-selling and longest-running independent monthly comic books, know for it's hyper-detailed art from its creator, **Todd McFarlane**. Now you can read the entire series wherever you are.

ALL ISSUES
AVAILABLE NOW DIGITALLY

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TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

EXPECTING SOMEONE ELSE?

A mysterious man appears — with no background, no memory and no place to call home. But he has powers that resemble those we learned about in Sunday School. Is it possible that he is our 'SAVIOR' in the flesh? And if he is, then why doesn't he know who he is or how he got his unique abilities?

Some will see him as a hero...or more. Others will see him as an enemy with God-like powers, here to disrupt the status quo of what we already believe. Many will rally behind him, while many others will denounce him. But none of us will be able to ignore him.

Written by industry greats Todd McFarlane (*Spawn, Spider-Man, Hulk, Haunt*) and Brian Holguin (*Spawn, Spawn: The Dark Ages, Kiss*) and beautifully painted by fan favorite artist, Clayton Crain (*Ghost Rider, X-Force, Carnage, Rai*), *SAVIOR* will give you something to believe in... but is it what you expected?

The *SAVIOR* trade paperback collects the entire 8-issue mini-series into one thick volume – that's 40 extra pages for free – all for the same low price as a regular trade paperback.

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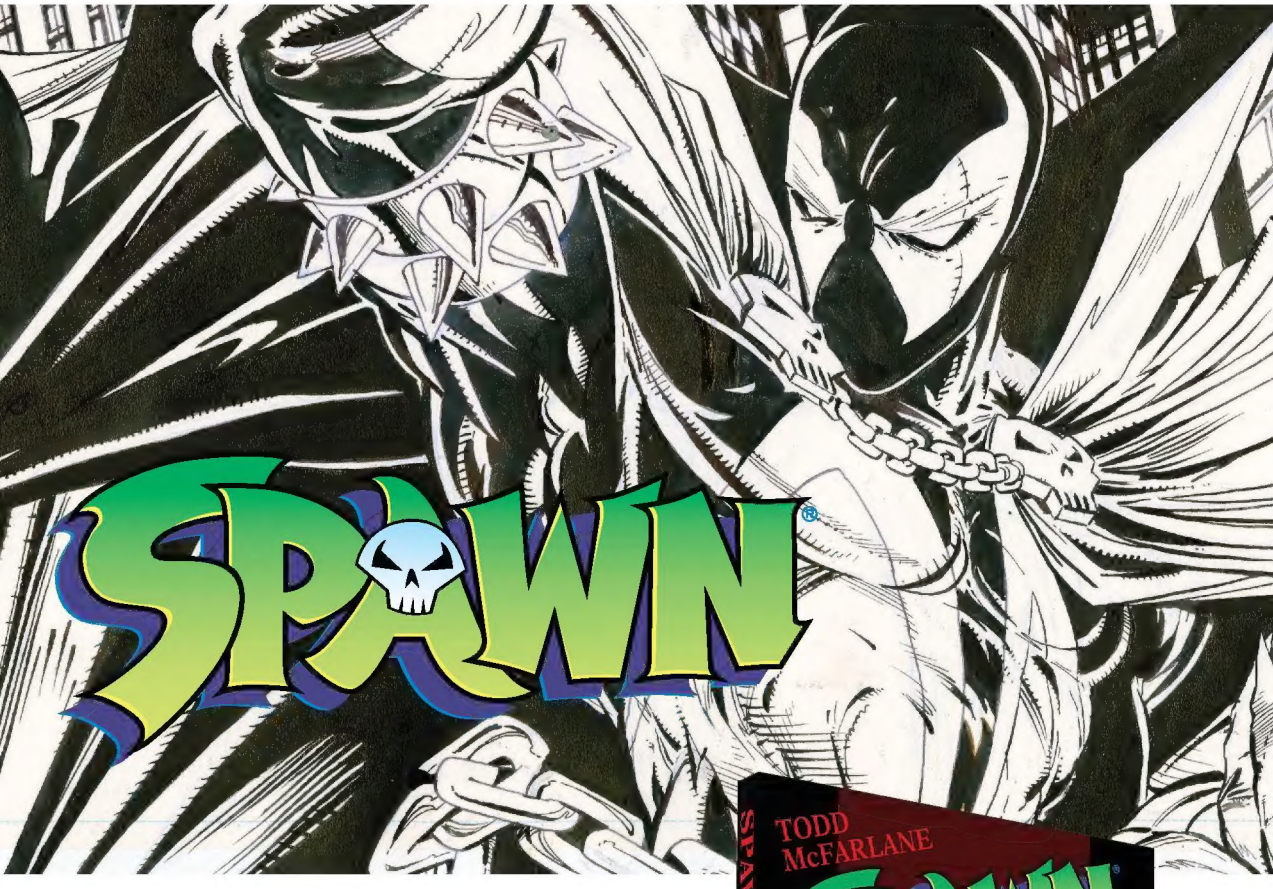
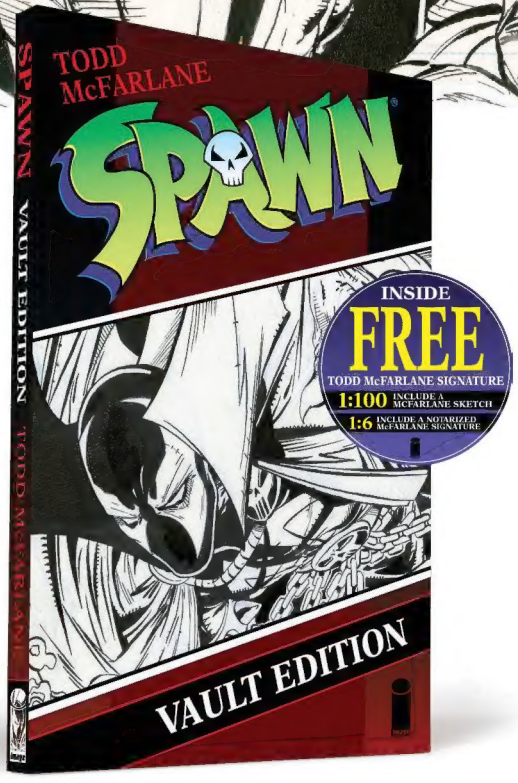


THE VAULT HAS BEEN OPENED.

In the summer of 1992, famed comic book artist Todd McFarlane unleashed his very own comic creation, SPAWN to the world. The first issues of SPAWN brought a fresh new character and villains to the comic world and immediately became a staple on comic stands everywhere, while highlighting Todd McFarlane's gritty, hyper-detailed style.

This oversized (12.25" x 17.25") hardcover book contains the first seven issues of SPAWN in their original, raw, art board form. At almost 200 pages, with never-before-published original art boards, and with ALL copies signed by Todd McFarlane himself, this book is a must-have for any comic fan. As an added bonus, a select number of books will not only have McFarlane's signature, but also, a one-of-a-kind sketch from McFarlane. In addition to the sketches, a number of books will have an official notarized seal, with one ultra-rare copy containing an official notarized seal and sketch by Todd.

The SPAWN: Vault Edition oversized hardcover book hits comic book stores everywhere on July 5th, and will carry a retail price of $175.



SPAWN VAULT EDITION HARDCOVER
IN STORES NOW

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